GARDEN SPOTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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TIME'S FIRST MORNING

Garden Spots
IN
The Old Testament

"Thou shalt be like a watered garden,
like a spring whose waters fail not."

BY
REV. J. PRESSLEY BARRETT, D. D.,
Author of "Facing The Truth", "Fruit-Bearing Truths", "Centennial of Religious Journalism", "Modern Light-Bearers", "Camping Along The Master's Trail", and "Forty Years on the Firing Line"

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DEDICATION

To Father and Mother, John and Mary Barrett, who so truly and faithfully directed their children in the ways of right living, and who, though long since gone to their eternal home, are none the less gratefully and affectionately remembered by the

AUTHOR.

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BY THE GARDEN GATE.

When I was a boy, living on the farm in Virginia, we richly fertilized small plats of ground for gardening—we called them "garden spots." Ordinary soil was good enough for corn and cotton, but for vegetables, small fruits, and flowers, we must have soil of extraordinary richness. To this day—fifty years later—the fertility of these "spots" abides.

This is a little parable, intimating the relation of the believer to his Bible—the great Book is adapted to the needs of Christians, but within its lids are many rich spots, all abloom with truth, exhaling the sweetness of heaven on earth. Around these we linger and feast. We are told that the Bible has 32,000 promises—oases of blessing, along the pilgrim way. We can present only a few of these in this book, but enough we trust to stimulate the hungry to search the Bible for larger supplies of soul-food.

Modern scholars think the old Bible writers were ignorant of astronomy and other sciences, and they may have been, except when they were under divine illumination from above. Hipparchus, 150 years before Christ, said he had counted the stars—that there were only 1,022. Ptolemy, who lived in the second century after Christ, differed from Hipparchus,

saying there were 1,026 stars in the midnight sky. Jeremiah, who lived more than 600 years before Christ, knew more than these men. He said "the hosts (stars) of heaven were innumerable." See Jer. 33: 22. No doubt Hipparchus and Ptolemy said that Jeremiah's was one of the mistakes of inspiration, but when Galileo turned the telescope about 1,500 years later on the heavens, then for the first time men began to grasp the truth that Jeremiah was right when he compared the countless stars with the sands of the seashore. In the early part of the nineteenth century, when Lord Rosse trained the great mirror of his telescope upon the sky at night, its first sweep of the heavens revealed the presence of 400,000,000 stars in the sky. Herschel was so astonished that he called the great multitude "glittering dust, scattered on the black background of the heavens." Who taught Jeremiah the science of astronomy, so long before that science was known to astronomers themselves? Jeremiah's teacher, the Lord, was far ahead of the scientists, and withal far more accurate. He was not mistaken, but the scientists were. Oh, let us cling to the old Book to the end—it is God's thought-granary, from which He feeds His people on the Bread of Heaven.

"Holy Bible, Book Divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine!"

J. P. B.

Dayton, Ohio, Dec. 1, 1915.

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating, years of time.

"How many anvils have you had?" said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

"And so," I thought, "The Anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon,
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The Anvil is unharmed, the hammer's GONE."

—*Anonymous.*

THE STORY OF TIME'S FIRST MORNING.

"Twilight is the foregleam of coming glory."

If you were standing in the great Yerkes Observatory at Lake Geneva, you might see the operator, sitting quietly in his chair. He has the great telescope so under his control that he seems to be doing almost nothing. Observe the movement of his hand. He touches a button, and the huge dome begins to revolve. He touches another button, and the whole floor rises noiselessly. He touches still another, and the gigantic tube begins to turn slowly till it points to a star in the heavens. The operator touches another button and sets a clock to work in conformity to the apparent movement of the star. One mind is directing the whole affair! How wonderful, and yet how simple to as many as understand the science of astronomy! This is but an insignificant picture of another, and a far greater work

wrought by One who was and is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Imparting Life

In Gen. 1: 2, we read—

"And the Spirit of God moved (brooded) upon the face of the waters."

The creative act of God had thrown a great mass of chaotic matter into space—it was void, without form, without life, and without beauty—a mere fruitless existence, floating in darkness, and apparently without a purpose. This is the beginning of what is now the earth, and to us the world in which we live, so full of life and beauty and blessing.

We are told that the Spirit of God moved, or brooded, upon the waters. Do you get the thought? The mother hen broods over her eggs till she has imparted her own life to them and has brought forth new life in her young. This graphically portrays the real idea of the Spirit brooding over the waters. As the patient brooding of the mother hen brings forth new life, so the brood-

ing of the Spirit over this mass of chaotic matter imparted life to this beginning of creation in a most wonderful way, unfolding the greatest panorama upon which men have ever looked, and the work is yet in process, unfolding the glories of the heavens and the earth. As the sunshine gives growth to vegetation and brings forth the fruit, so the Spirit in the divine life fashions us after the life of Christ.

Changes Wrought

Let us look upon the scene as it developed in the beginning. As the brooding of the Spirit imparted life to this mass of matter in chaos, results began to come as follows:

Light flashed upon the darkness of the earth.

Light separated, or drove the darkness away.

The firmament in its beauty and glory came forth and the waters were divided from the waters—above and below the firmament.

The waters were separated from the land.

The earth was fructified and yielded a marvelous fruitage to meet the needs of the forthcoming human family.

The sea was fructified, being made to abound in precious stones and living creatures for the use of man.

Man was brought forth, last, but not least, in the creation, being richly endowed with rare physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual gifts from the hand of the Creator.

The Idea Illustrated

In all of these beneficent acts of God, we behold a very marked illustration. The work of the Spirit upon the material matter, giving it life, utility, and beauty, is prophetic of what He will do in the development and fruitfulness of man. This work of the Spirit but illustrates His work in giving life to man, in developing his moral and spiritual character, restoring to man his likeness to God.

Let us see if this is correct. In what sense is there a likeness between matter in chaos and man in sin?

Matter had a simple existence, without life, without form, without beauty, and without fruitfulness. So man was dead in trespasses and in sin, having not the fear of God before him.

As matter had existence, but not life, so the unregenerate man has an existence, but not the life of God—he is void and empty, not at all occupied with the thoughts of God, but delighting in sin.

Without Life: Without Light

Matter existed without life and without light. So did man. He may enjoy human wisdom, but in sin he knows nothing of the true light of God. As the Spirit found the world void and empty, giving no glory to God, so the same Spirit finds unrenewed man enveloped in darkness and dead in sin, not at all concerned for the glory of God.

Out of that chaotic matter the Spirit has made this beautiful and fruitful world, filling it with wealth and untold blessing. In this He reveals to us what He can do for man, redeemed

from sin and made a member of the family of God—endowing him with rare and high gifts and imparting to him the very life of God, till lifted out of sin, he shall be restored to his Adamic beauty and given the largest field of usefulness in the service of God. He put the chaotic matter at its best, making it beautiful and fruitful. Shall we believe that the Spirit will do less for us, being created in the likeness of God, but cheated out of it by the cunning of Satan? Shall we not share as largely in the Spirit's bounty, we who have been made in the likeness of the Creator Himself, as did the mass of chaotic matter of which the Spirit has made this beautiful world, filled with the bounty of the seas, the wealth of the earth, and the glory of the heavens—will He do less for man than He did for this mass of unformed matter that cannot share in the bliss of eternal life? Nay, God has redeemed man and called him to a larger and a higher life, in which he may become a worker together with God, and to life in Christ.

Parallelism in the Work of the Spirit

The work of the Spirit in the physical world is surpassed only by His work in the realms of spiritual life. We may trace the parallelism of the Spirit's work in the two spheres.

In the physical world the Spirit first gave light to drive away darkness. What He did for matter He may do for man. Then He imparted life and made the world fruitful. Even so in the spiritual life, man is given light which brings in him conviction of sin and repentance. In this separation justification is God's gift, which prepares man for this new life in Christ. With the gift of the regenerated life comes the making of the inner life fruitful and the bestowment of power for service. This leads to the consecration of the life to God, in which are developed all the graces of the Spirit, reaching full fruition.

Thus the chaos of matter was organized, given shape and beauty, and made fruitful. So the life of man, redeemed by Jesus Christ, is wonderfully saved

and made the servant of God. Spiritually speaking, the unsaved man is a chaotic mass, without the life of God, without beauty, without light, without fruitfulness; in God's sight a mere mass of worthlessness. The life thus saved becomes, under the brooding of the Spirit, the beautiful, the illuminated, the enriched, the finished temple of God. Under the gift and work of the Spirit the life of man has been fitly shaped and fashioned till it has become a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2: 19-22). A wonderful thought, indeed!

God's Willingness

As we see it, God worked in the creation of the world His wonders through the Spirit, giving light and shape, beauty and finish, power and fruitfulness, that He might convince fallen man of His willingness and ability to do the greater thing of rescuing man from sin and bringing his life back into harmony with the Creator. If God, through the Spirit, could do the one, He most certainly can do the other —He most certainly has done it, and will

do it again, day by day, till the last believing and trusting soul has been lifted from the depths of sin to the heights of life in Christ Jesus. If you desire a picture of what we shall be, when we have been transformed fully by grace and made like Christ, then look at the mass of dead matter, without shape and without beauty; without power and without fruitfulness, as it lay out in the darkness of the beginning, and then turn and look at the beautiful world in which you are now living, so full of every good thing. The former was developed into the latter by the brooding of the Spirit. Think of that and then think of yourself as dead in trespasses and sins, without God and without hope in the world, and be assured of the ever-living fact that God has made us a thousand times more precious than material matter, and therefore there can be no doubt that He will do infinitely more for our salvation and perfection in Christ, than He ever

did for nature. With such a view before us, no passing cloud should obscure the sun of our joy and hope in Christ.

"All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and Heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee—
Center of unbroken praise!
Field and forest, valley and mountain,
Blooming meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee."

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GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

Self-indulgence is the besetting sin of the times; but if you long to be a strong, athletic Christian, you must count the cost and renounce the things of the flesh. It will cost you the pulling up of some old favorite sins by the roots and the cutting loose from some entangling alliances, and some sharp conflicts with the tempter; it will cost you the submitting of your will to the will of Christ; but you gain more than you ever gave up.—Theodore L. Cuyler.

A WONDERFUL GARDEN STORY.

"In the garden of the heart God's flowers grow."

Around the word *garden* cluster many beautiful ideas. Every land and every language has added to the scope of the meaning of the word, till it is associated with rich beauty and rare fragrance. The garden is a productive spot. Its flowers are beautiful, and its fruits are rich.

"Thus beauty here is like to that above,
And loveliness leads up to perfect love."

Men have spent time and money trying to locate the exact spot of the Garden in Eden, to describe its situation, to determine its fruits, and to learn its full history. It might be well to learn these things, but something else is more timely and far more valuable to God's people, viz.: To search out and know its significance in human history—what it means in the thought of God and what it means for us.

If we may be so fortunate as to make this discovery, we shall be more highly blessed than all those who have claimed to determine the location of the garden, its fruits and its wealth. Let us begin at the beginning and so seek in a simple way to ascertain its meaning. The first words concerning it we find in Gen. 2:8—

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed."

Placed by the Lord

As the creative hand of God made one thing after another, He put each in the place for which it had been made. The planting of this garden was a part of the creative plan. Man was placed in it to serve a high and holy purpose.

Then may we ask, *What was the Garden in Eden?* Attempts to answer that question have awakened much controversy. We call it the Garden of Eden, but the Bible calls it the Garden *in* Eden. Our task is not so much to discover what the Garden in Eden was, as what is its meaning to us. To do that, we must find the key-thought, and that

I think we may find in verse nine of chapter two, which reads:

"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

The Significance of the Tree of Life

Beyond all question the Tree of Life had a spiritual significance. If this be true, and we believe it is, then we have caught the thread which may lead us to the fountain-head and to a full explanation, not so much of what the Garden in Eden was, as what its meaning is—now as then. If the tree of knowledge of good and evil is spiritual in character, then we may safely conclude that the garden is a symbol of the Church in the world.

One essential fact of the garden was its productiveness. This seems to have been its chief characteristic. It produced every tree and fruit and flower that could contribute to the comfort of man and to his pleasure. Symbolically this is a beautiful setting forth of God's conception of what His Church should

be to the human family—productive of nourishment for the spiritual life of man. He likens His Church to a garden because the language describing it and the thought it presents can be easily and readily understood by men and women.

The first thing to attract our attention among the trees of the garden is the *Tree of Life.* Near by was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and then scattered around were all manner of trees, each bearing its fruits in its season. And what is the Tree of Life? It is the source of all life. To this thought one explanation seems sufficient—the Tree of Life is the symbol of God. As this tree was in the midst of the garden, so God has declared that He dwells in the midst of His people. Zech. 2 : 10, 11.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

And what is this tree? It is Divine Truth, likened to a tree, bearing the virtues and graces of the divine life. To eat of these would be to make one wise, but this wisdom would expose its possessor to sin and death. It was to save

man from such a calamity that God gave the command:

"Ye shall not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

Not to eat of that tree meant innocency and freedom from moral responsibility. To eat of it meant an open way to knowledge, and to sin and death. The beasts of the field did not eat of it, and they remain innocent to this day, but man ate of it and came to know good and evil, and sinned. In the day he sinned, he died to God and holiness. It was in this moment of spiritual calamity that God offered to redeem man from the curse of sin. In the face of sin, God's goodness gave man another chance, the right to choose between right and wrong, opening the way to life in Christ. Though man had fallen in the way of death, yet God turned him into the way of life. Is it not a thousand times better to suffer from sin with the privilege to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, being made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ to an everlasting inheritance

that can never fade away, than to be as innocent as the beasts of the field, and with all as ignorant and helpless as they? Then was not sin a blessing to man? A thousand times, NO! It was a curse, but because of God's great love for man, He turned the curse into a blessing by giving man the privilege of salvation from sin through Christ. Having thus started man on the way to life, He assigned to him the duty of keeping and dressing the Garden in Eden, but keeping and dressing the garden would not make it fruitful. God met this lack in man's ability by sending forth a great river to water the garden. Gen. 2: 10-14.

"From the throne flows a wondrous stream,
On its waters the love lights gleam;
God the Father His mercy shows.
By the river which ever flows.
Flow on River of Eden, fair and bright,
Ever bearing a message from the throne of light."

Starting in Eden as one great river, it divided into four streams. This river is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Its four branches indicate, as I think, the four-

fold work of the Spirit of God in the Church.

The first branch of the river was called *Pison,* indicating that it was *full* and *rushing.* This characteristic of the Spirit appeared on the day of Pentecost. See Acts 2: 2.

The second branch of this river was called *Gihon,* indicating rapid movement; not merely power, but power *filled with life.* This characteristic appeared also on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand men and women were saved in a single day under the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2: 41.

The third branch of this river was called *Hiddekel,* indicating the *swift-flying arrows of truth* in the gospel age of salvation, as inaugurated on the day of Pentecost, when the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the multitudes, bringing them to repentance and life in Christ. See Acts 2: 43, 44.

The fourth river was called *Euphrates,* suggesting the *fruitfulness the river would give to the garden,* as indicated in Acts 2: 46, 47.

The River Is a Symbol

It is therefore clear that these rivers may symbolize the work of the Holy Spirit in this fourfold application. This is foreshadowed in John 7: 37-39, where the work of the Spirit is likened to the outflowing of a river, enriching and giving great fruitfulness to all within its reach. It was so regarded long before its actual manifestation on the Day of Pentecost, as you may see by turning to Ezekiel 47, where the river flowing from under the house, eastward, by the south side of the altar, became a swelling stream flowing in great fulness, and rapidly, toward and through the Dead Sea, giving life to everything its waters touched. What a symbol of the Holy Spirit, flowing through the Church and giving power and fruitfulness to its life and its activities!

This great work was exemplified in the early Pentecost of the Church. Jerusalem was a dry and thirsty land, giving forth practically no life nor fruit, but when it was watered as a gar-

den by this fourfold river, then new life and rich fruitage were brought forth in abundance—a beautiful symbol of the Church of Christ, with the Holy Spirit, like a great river, sweeping through its every nook and corner, making it blossom as the rose and fruit as the valley of Eschol. As this mighty spiritual river filled the Dead Sea with life, and sweeping through the valley of dry bones, made them to live again, so if God's people to-day could be persuaded to wait in "the upper room" till the outpouring of this mighty river might be again given to the Church of Christ, again should we see the dead made alive and even the dry bones of a formal and stilted body of believers should be made to live again and in great power glorify God among men. If the professed Church is ever to be made alive in Christ, some means must be found by which she can be brought to realize her need of this mighty onflowing river of the Spirit of God, and be induced to wait in "the upper room"

till she receive her Pentecost, as did the early Church.

The Garden in Eden a Prophecy

We may not so certainly understand just what the Garden in Eden was, nor where it was located, but one thing seems quite sure, viz.: It is a prophecy and a picture of the Church of Christ, bearing the precious fruits of the Spirit, being watered by the outflowing river of the Holy Ghost, marvelously adding to the glory of God in the full establishment of the kingdom of Christ among men, and for their salvation.

In God's Garden, the Church, watered by this River, which grows deeper and wider, as it flows, imparting life and thrift and fruitage to every plant, to every believer living in its stimulating waters—

"The lily white that bloometh there is purity;
The fragrant violet is surnamed humility;
The lovely damask rose is here called patience;
The rich and cheerful marigold is obedience;
But one there is that bears a crown the rest above,
A crown imperial, and this flower is holy LOVE!"

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IN THE GARDEN

"It is not so much where you are as what you are that makes your heaven. The bright, cheery soul who lives the life of trust sees only the sunny side of everything, and has learned to endure cheerfully and with a bright face where everything looks dark."

FUSSING OVER CLEANING OUT OLD WELLS.

"The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life."

There are few things in family life more valuable than a good supply of pure water. In our country and day a good supply of water for family use is not highly prized, and for the reason that we have an abundance at our command in any place we may go. It was not that way in the East, at least in some parts it was not. Water was scarce and hard to get. I heard a missionary from Arabia once say when he came to the United States on a furlough, that every time he saw a person take a drink of water and then throw away what was left, he felt like saying: "Oh, don't do it!" In Arabia, he said, they would not throw away a drop if they could avoid it, because water was so scarce and so hard to get.

This gives us some estimate of the value placed upon a good well in that

country. Till this day they seek to save every water supply possible, and hence we read in Gen. 26: 18—

"And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them."

The Work of An Enemy

It was after the death of Abraham that the Philistines destroyed these wells, so that later when Isaac came to look after his father's property, he found no water. He began to hunt for the old wells which his father used, only to find that an enemy had filled them up and destroyed their value. This opened Isaac's eyes to the fact that his father's enemies were still abroad in the land.

At once he began to open and to clean out the old wells for a water supply. He seemed never for a moment to have thought of any lack of property rights there, as it was his father's land, and therefore his father's wells. He put his men to work, cleaning out those old wells. The first one undertaken was

Esek, that was the name Abraham gave to the well in his day. Isaac still called it Esek. To his surprise, he had not completed the work of cleaning it out, when he found the herdmen of Gerar raising serious objections to his rights. They said it was theirs, and at once began to contend. Esek means strife. Do not forget that, as we may have need to remember it.

The Principle of Non-Resistance

What do you suppose Isaac did? Why, as strange as it may seem, he refused to contend with them and simply moved on to the next old well, and at once began to clean it out. The name of that well was *Sitnah,* meaning hatred. Isaac had not much more than got to work, in cleaning out Sitnah, before the herdmen of Gerar again appeared, objecting to his cleaning it out. Some people do not like to have things clean about them, anyway. These Gerarites seemed determined that Isaac should have no good water in that land. They simply held on and objected to his cleaning out Sitnah.

Again, we find Isaac a peace-lover, and so, rather than have a fuss over the well, he instructed his men to pull up and move on. He led the way and left Sitnah to his enemies, rather than strive against them. He soon came to another old well which had been the property of his father. Here he again began to clean out and make ready for using the water. This time, to his joy, the Gerarites did not bother him. Of course, he expected them, as they had striven against him at both Esek and Sitnah, but they did not come, and he called the name of the third well *Rehoboth*, for he said:

"For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

But one well was not enough to meet his needs, and so he soon moved on to Beer-sheba, and there the Lord appeared to him and said:

"I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant, Abraham's sake."

A Mark of God's Favor

This was such a mark of God's pleasure in Isaac that at once he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord, and there he pitched his tent, and there the servants of Isaac began to dig a well. They felt that a brighter day was dawning upon them, especially as their enemies had quit following and contending against them. At last Isaac felt that he could settle down in peace and be happy. But it was with Isaac as it has been with many others, he was measuring his joy all too soon, for before the well was completed, behold here came Abimelech and Phicol, the chief captain of his army. Of course, their appearance disturbed him not a little. He supposed they were intending to push him to some other place. Twice he had given up his wells for the sake of peace, and now they are coming again. He went out to meet them, and as they came together, Isaac said:

"Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?"

Greatly Surprised

Their answer gave Isaac the surprise of his life, for Abimelech answered:

"We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee—That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord!"

Then they ate together, and the men were gone, and Isaac was feeling just fine, for his enemies had become his friends, having made a covenant with him to give him no more trouble. Just about the time the men left, Isaac's well-diggers came in and reported that they had "found water," and they called the place *Shebah,* the well of an oath, referring possibly to the treaty Abimelech made with Abraham on or near that spot almost a hundred years ago.

This is a most interesting incident and it may be worth while to give time to its study. Let us first note the facts and then see what they teach us:

Isaac, though living long before the time of Christ, yet possessed His Spirit

—he would not contend for what might be his legal rights. Rather than contend, he moved on to look for another well, where he could get water, though in doing so, he suffered great inconvenience for himself and family, besides he lost all of the work his men had done in cleaning out the well. This had been twice repeated, but still Isaac's patience held out.

Then the Lord rewarded him with a well without contention, and gave him great fruitfulness in all of his work, a very striking evidence that Isaac was not losing as much as on the surface he seemed to be. This is a great lesson for us all. When we please the Lord in dealing with our fellows, we are told that He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us. If we obey the Lord and maintain His Spirit, there is nothing left to the Lord but to make good His promises, and He will do it invariably.

An Altar Unto the Lord

In recognition of God's goodness to him, Isaac built an altar unto the Lord

and his servants digged another well. As the king went out one way, Isaac's servants came in another, saying:

"We have found water, and they called that well Shebah."

This incident gives us a sort of spiritual diagram of the true conduct of a Christian under great provocation at the hand of an enemy, closing with blessing and victory for the man who conforms conscientiously to the Word of God. Notice how silent Isaac remained when Abimelech intimated that he needed this covenant to keep Isaac from hurting him (see verse 29). The truth is, Isaac had acted on the principle which Jesus later gave to the world, viz.:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also."

Peace Methods Prevail

Isaac did it, and Abimelech was completely routed by peace methods, a far greater victory than if Isaac had murdered every one of them outright. How good if all Christians would thus act

under trial at the hands of an enemy! With God's love as a real basis for such conduct, the last enemy of righteousness would flee, leaving us in full possession of our rights, with no one to molest or make us afraid. God's way is always the wise and good way!

Abraham's old wells were filled up by enemies. Isaac went bravely to work to clean them out. He worked by peace methods and gained a blessed victory—had more water than he knew need for—and God made his enemies to become his friends. How wonderful is the triumph of the right in its results!

In most of the Christian homes of to-day, no doubt, there are some wells which have been filled up. As sources of refreshing, a great loss has been sustained, and the need of the hour is to clean out those old wells, and so let the pure, living waters flow for the spiritual refreshing of the inmates and neighbors. Never mind as to enemies—God will take care of you.

"No matter what may be the test—
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast—
God will take care of you."

A Choked Heart Means no Service

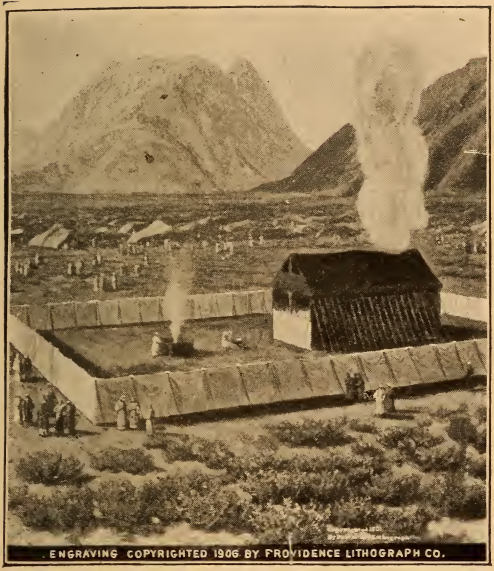
To-day many a heart is all choked up with the devil's debris. No service for God and the right—that is the result. Better imitate Isaac and get to work to clean out the old wells.

There are the old wells of a once rich spiritual life in a loving heart, but now they are no longer useful, no longer refreshing—they are choked up! An enemy hath done this! Let us build an altar unto the Lord! Let us get to work and clean out the old well of love, now filled with malice, or choked up with ill-will or worldliness or vain ambitions—how filthy is the heart, if poisoned with these things! No wonder God cannot use us in His service with our hearts filled with the devil's debris. Let us clean out and clean up, and give God a good, clean life, inside and out, in which His Spirit may dwell, and through which He may work, for the saving of the people and for the building up of His Church! Do your enemies hinder you? Do as Isaac did—maintain the Spirit of Christ and clean

out all these old wells and so give God a clean and beautiful and sweet life in which to live and work. Then, through you, He will silence your enemies, turning their ways unto the Lord and winning the blessing and riches of grace both for yourself and for them.

"Flow down, thou stream of life divine,
Thy quickening love deliver;
Oh, flow throughout this soul of mine—
Forever and forever!"

Let us commit ourselves to that unsleeping love and wisdom and power. He will go with us all the way through —not alone to the end of life, but to the end that lies beyond the end. There will be our final going out, our exodus, and our final coming in, our home-coming. And there is nothing that lies between you and the threshold of that heavenly home that need ever fill you with dismay if God be with you.—John McNeill.



THE TABERNACLE

Yes, the spirit and heart of anxiety is the denial for the time being, or the forgetting, of God. Therefore its cure, our deliverance, comes with calling Him to our remembrance, that is, with prayer. What does one wish, when one is harassed and anxious, but to feel that he and all that is really of value to him are in good hands, for they are in God's hands? And how can that feeling come to me and stay with me when things seem contrary in the world and in my lot, except by drawing near to God in Jesus Christ, and bethinking myself that He who spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, will not fail us in our day of need, or, if He seem to fail us, it is that He is preparing for us some greater good, and preparing us to receive it?—John A. Hutton.

SOUNDING THE KEY-NOTE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

"As the Lord commanded, so did he."

Is it hard to do that? It is and it is not. Paradoxical as that answer may seem to be, nevertheless, it is true. Under the Spirit's power obedience is easy, but in man's strength it is difficult, if not impossible. Obedience is the foundation of both service and sacrifice. If a servant obey not, his service will offend the master. Obedience is emphasized throughout the Scriptures. Even Noah, in building the ark and filling it with two of every kind, was most careful to follow instructions given him. In Gen. 6: 22, we read:

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him; so did he."

So this preacher of righteousness set the key-note of the obedient and consecrated life. He was careful to do all of his work as God had commanded. We shall find the great leaders in the work

of God were always careful to do the Lord's work as He had commanded. Abraham was true to the same key-note. In Gen. 12: 4, it is written:

"So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him."

At first thought it might seem that Abraham's task was an easy one, but it was not. It required heroic faith to obey. God told him to get up and depart from his father's house and to go unto a land which the Lord would show him.

Prompt Obedience

Without hesitation and without complaint our hero obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he was going, only knowing that God had spoken and that he was obeying:

"Faith is a grasping of Almighty power;
The hand of man laid on the arm of God—
The grand and blessed hour in which the
things impossible to me
Become the possible, O Lord, through Thee."

Again, as if Abram had not been fully tested, the Lord gave him another call, more trying even than the first—it was a call to offer up his son, Isaac, but having learned obedience in the begin-

ning, he found it comparatively easy to offer his son. In Genesis 22 : 3, we read :

"And Abraham arose up early in the morning.....and went into a place of which God had told him and there made ready to offer his only son."

This was the climax test of his faith, but he did not falter till God bade him stay his hand. Thus through exact obedience Abraham has become the hero of faith to all the ages following his day.

But the trial of Abraham's faith was not sufficient for the trial of faith in the ages to follow, and so we find that the great leaders among the people of God have been tested each in his own day.

The Artisan Must Obey

In Exodus 36 : 1, we see this same exact obedience was required not only of leaders, but of laborers as well, as when we read :

"Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded."

Here we see two men engaged in building the tabernacle—doing the man-

ual work—and we observe that they are just as careful to do their work as God had commanded them, as had been Noah and Abraham in their labors. From this we get the thought that all kinds of work that are good and serviceable to men should be done as the Lord has commanded it.

Moses Was Careful to Obey

Again we find Moses, the great lawgiver, was just as careful to do his work as the Lord commanded as were any others already mentioned. In Exodus 40: 16, we read:

"Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he."

We are thus brought face to face with the care with which these servants did the work to which God had called them. Moses displays great anxiety in making his report as to how he had built the tabernacle. For at least eight times within a few verses he stops to say that he did the work as the Lord had commanded him. Thus showing that Moses felt that God's approval and blessing

upon his work depended upon an exact conformity to the directions which God had given him, and so, as he reported to the Lord the various stages of the work, he stopped and emphasized the fact that he had done it as the Lord had commanded. Not only did the Lord ask for exact obedience on the part of leaders and skilled workmen, but of the masses, for in Numbers 9 : 23 we read:

"At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses."

A Chosen Leader

Here we learn also that God often speaks to the masses through a chosen leader, as He did in this case through Moses. Notwithstanding the command was given at second hand, the children of Israel were very careful to rest when God said rest, and to journey when He said journey.

We get another remarkable instance of God commanding even a leader through another leader. In Joshua 11 : 15 it is said:

"As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses."

Evidently both Moses and Joshua were more concerned about obeying God exactly than either of them was to be his "own boss and to do as he pleased." In this day many a leader will refuse to take orders from another leader, feeling that to do so would be humiliating to his own dignity. It was not so with Joshua, for when Moses told Joshua what the Lord had told him to have Joshua do, Joshua left nothing undone, but obeyed fully.

Evidently exact obedience is the Christian's stronghold upon God. If one dares to obey God, he thereby takes a claim upon the Almighty Himself for approval. In doing as commanded, there is no ground and no room for complaint of any kind.

The King Must Obey

Even kings found this to be true in reigning over their people. In 2 Kings 18: 6, we have an instance of this sort, for of Hezekiah it was said:

"For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses."

Thus we see that Hezekiah was glad to obey the Lord through the commands He gave to Moses, although it was about seven hundred years after the death of Moses when he thus rendered full obedience. Notice the emphatic language used of Hezekiah—he *clave* to the Lord, showing the zeal of his heart and the intensity of his purpose to be obedient, and well he might, for the divine approval depended upon his prompt obedience. We get another illustration of exact obedience in the words of Ezra (7: 23) where it is said:

"Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?"

In that statement we have several emphatic ideas:

1. That Ezra held that anything that God commanded should be done, not only as God commanded it, but that it should be *diligently* done, showing conclusively that Ezra had a high

appreciation of the advantages of exact obedience.

2. We see from the latter part of the verse that Ezra understood that disobedience would bring the wrath of God against the kingdom.

A Mistaken Idea

Too many of us excuse ourselves from exact obedience by thinking that our way is as good as any, but the old-time servants of God did not so understand it. They felt, and rightly so, that God had authority to command and therefore it was their business to obey.

There were some in olden times who even dared to disobey God, but they paid for it by sacrificing their own lives to their disobedience.

We have a conspicuous example of the destruction wrought by disobedience in the case of Nadab and Abihu. In Leviticus 10: 1, 2, the case is stated thus:

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not, and there went out fire from

the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

God's Displeasure

In this incident we cannot mistake the displeasure of God toward disobedience. No doubt many of us are tempted to think that that was done for some cause unknown to us in that far distant day,—that it cannot apply to the matter of obedience on the part of God's children in this day of the twentieth century, and yet we know that God is the same, that truth is the same, that obedience is the same, that punishment is the same, and the displeasure of God against all those who dishonor Him must be the same, and if this be true, as doubtless it is, then it becomes the ordinary men and women, the church members of this day, to be very careful in all their services to do things which God commands them to do, according to His commandments. The examples of Nadab and Abihu are by no means the only examples of the displeasure of God as shown against disobedience. Many others in various ages of the world hav'

suffered dreadfully through disobedience to the commands of God.

The Decline of the Church and Its Cause

We hear much in this day of light of a decline of the Church, of the worldly church members, of their ignorance of the Bible and of the faithlessness of men and women who profess to follow Jesus. Is it too much to assume that all this is but the fruitage of the carelessness and indifference of the people of this age in not *exactly* obeying God? Almost every denomination of Christians in the United States, and other countries as well, has been on the decline for several years, according to the statistics which are given as authoritative. Will any man dare to say that this condition of the people of God, at this time, is not due largely to the unfaithfulness of the Church and her ministers in not obeying *exactly* the commands of the Lord?

Take as an illustration the matter of the financial support of the Church. God has explicitly and emphatically given direction by which money shall be

contributed for the support of His work. It is always to be a *free-will offering,* and yet in the face of this plain command, given over and over through the Scriptures, we find many church people who delight to forsake the Lord's way; and doing so, they invent some way of their own to put the Church into the money-making business by socials, by fairs, by ice cream festivals, by bazaars, and a great many other things, wherein the Church is made to assume the position of a dependent, begging the world to come in and buy at fabulous prices, to replenish the treasury of the Church. Can there be any wonder that God Almighty has seen fit to withhold prosperity from His Church under such rank disobedience as this indicates?

No Authority for Indirect Methods

If there is a line, or a word, taken in its true sense from Genesis to Revelation, which authorizes God's people to raise money for the support of His cause in any of these ways, other than by the free-will offering, we have never found it—have you?

Through the Scriptures God speaks expressly, commending to us the giving of tithes, of the free-will offering, that His house may be supplied with all its needs, financially, and yet thousands of men and women, whose names are enrolled upon the Church book, are daring to disobey God's plain command and institute these other doubtful and untrue methods for supporting the cause of Christ. We are told that Abraham gave tithes of all he possessed, and Solomon, the wise man, said:

"There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."

Then, as if emphasizing that thought, he further said:

"The liberal soul shall be made fat and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

Shall We Put God to the Test?

Malachi brought a great message to Israel, bearing on this thought. God desired him to say to his people:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of

heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—Mal. 3: 10.

Nor is the New Testament lacking in instructions upon this very thought. In 1 Cor. 16: 2, we read:

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

Again Jesus lays special emphasis upon this thought, as in Luke 6: 38, when He says:

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete, withal it shall be measured to you again."

If the Church had the courage and the faith to step out upon that promise and obey God, not only in giving of their money, but in giving of their time, and their talents, and their influence, to the cause of Christ, the Church would see such a day of prosperity as it has never known in all its modern history. We find it hard to raise sufficient money for the support of the cause, and largely because we do not obey God. God's bless-

ing on what we have will multiply and make it ample to meet the needs of ourselves and of the cause of Christ as well, if we obey Him.

An Abundance Was Given

We have a remarkable incident, illustrating this very fact, as given in Exodus 36: 3, 4, 5. You may readily recall the circumstance. God had told Moses to call upon the people for an offering for the building of the tabernacle. The offering was not to be gotten from an oyster supper, or a necktie party, or a bazaar, or an ice cream social, but the money was to be *given* by the people of God, freely given as God had commanded. The result was wonderful. Gifts came in such abundance that it was necessary to send and request the people to stop giving, having received enough and more. Human methods never bring such results, but God's way brings these results. Alas, for the folly of man's way as against God's. What shall be the way of your service—God's way, or your own?

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THE TEST OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH

Suppose we endeavor to translate the Christ of the past into the Christ of the present; the Christ of theology into the Christ of ethics; the Christ of ritual into the Christ of practice; the Christ of the Church into the Christ of the kingdom; the Christ of yesterday into the Christ of to-day; the Christ of to-day into the Christ of to-morrow.—George Dana Boardman.

HIDING IN A CLEFT OF THE ROCK.

"In Christ the Riven Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

In all human experience there is nothing more interesting than a soul burdened and agonizing in prayer. In the Scriptures we have many examples. Moses is a type of a praying man. He was seeking to prevail with God in behalf of his back-slidden people. Judging from his language, the word *burdened* scarcely indicates the intensity of his agony.

While Moses was in the mount with God, Israel had gone into idolatry—worshiping a calf of gold. When this fact was made known to him, he was astounded beyond measure. But he was a courageous soul. In the face of such terrible spiritual disaster he refused to give up his people, and continued to plead for their forgiveness. That was heroism in prayer. In Exodus 32: 32, Moses rises to the sublime height of entire self-effacement, asking God to

forgive the sins of his people and declaring that if He would not do that, he himself desired to be blotted out of the book which God had written. Instead of forgiveness, the Lord sent a plague upon them, and refused to go with them to the land that was flowing with milk and honey. Under this refusal to go with them Moses was stirred mightily. Then he prayed, possibly as never before. He sought a closer walk with God and a fuller and freer communion with Him. He did not, as Moses hoped He would, flood him with His overwhelming presence in a moment. God saw it was better to give Moses a smaller view of Himself, and therefore the Lord said unto him:

"Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift* of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." —Exodus 33: 21-23.

Talking With God

We know something of this wonderful conversation between Moses and

* Clift is the old form of our English word cleft —an opening or place of safety.

God. The man of weakness pleads with the God of strength. Moses said,

"You say, Bring up this people, that you know me by name, that I have found grace in Thy sight. Then, if so, show me Thy way and remember this nation is Thy people."

In answer to this earnest plea, God said to Moses,

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Here, again, we see Moses rising to his best, as he declares,

"If Thy presence go not with us, carry us up not hence."

From this it seems that God's presence is the infallible evidence of His favor to them that fear Him.

It was in answer to this prayer that the Lord said:

"I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight."

Moses was in a great struggle with the Almighty. His hunger knew no bounds. He was reaching out after God, and his cry was—

"I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

We are tempted to ask ourselves, Had not Moses seen the glory of the Lord

over and over? No doubt he had, but the greater the burden that rested upon him the greater became his desire to see the glory of God, which would be commensurate with the desire of his longing heart. Had he not seen the Lord's glory when He descended upon the mount as in fire (Ex. 19: 18)? Had he not also seen His glory when He went up into the cloud on the mount (Ex. 24:18)?

Whetting the Appetite

It is said the increase of appetite doth grow by what it feeds upon. That is a secret in the Christian life which many have not learned. Feeding upon God's thoughts whets the spiritual appetite to an intensity of desire which no ordinary force can resist. It was so with Moses. He had been feeding upon the glories of God, and the more he fed, the more he wished to feed. Hence, after beholding many of the wonderful displays of God's power, we find him again crying out, "Show me Thy glory."

It was in answer to this marvelous prayer of Moses that the Lord said, "I

will make all my goodness to pass before thee," and then the Lord tells him how He will do all this for him. God condescends to reason with Moses, saying:

"Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live."

Then the Lord said to him:

"Behold, there is a place by me and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass that while my glory passeth by that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."

What a marvelous favor the urgency of Moses' prayer had gained for himself.

"There is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock!"

What safety is implied, what glory is promised, standing upon a rock by the side of Almighty God! No wonder Moses was a great leader—since God not only went with him, but stood by him.

In a Cleft in the Rock

This leads us to consider the wonderful promise which God here made to Moses.

I. *God's place for His people—by Him, in a Cleft in a Rock.*

What infinite blessing and honor thus given to man—to the soul which, being athirst for God, refuses to be satisfied without His great fulness. Christ is often spoken of as a Rock, and He ever lives at the right hand of God, and hence, the real meaning is that the place of God's people is in Christ Jesus. In Christ we see enough of His glory to whet the appetite for more and more, till the soul aflame with holy love will reach up unto Him and be satisfied.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Thus we are brought to see enough of His glory to satisfy the longing heart. It is only in this way that the Christian enjoys a continual unfolding of the inner glory which is ever creating a keener appetite—it can be satisfied only in Christ Jesus.

Sin and Unbelief Stumbling-Stones

II. *In giving His people a place by Himself, God gives a rock-bottom foundation for their faith.*

Sin and unbelief caused God to refuse His presence and rest to Israel. But Moses' faith and yearning desire brought from God a promise of a yet fuller revelation of the glory of heaven, but these will never be given to the people of God, except as they stand by Him in the Rock, Christ Jesus.

It is no wonder that many professing Christians do not enjoy the Christian life. It is no wonder that they fall into temptation and make shipwreck of the faith—living far off from God, it cannot be otherwise. Here Moses teaches us a lesson which we cannot neglect, except at the peril of our personal peace and happiness.

III. *If we would know God and enjoy His presence and see His glory, we must be hid in the Cleft in the Rock.*

And what is this Rock? It is Christ. Then the Cleft in the Rock must be the riven side of Jesus. To know this Cleft and to make it our refuge is the only explanation of the peace and joy of the believer in the midst of the disappointments and trials of life. To be hid in

this Rock is full of meaning: 1. It means as our days so shall be our strength. 2. It means trials and poverty are God's method of polishing the inner life, bringing it to its best. 3. It means pain and disappointment are but divine chastenings, preparing the soul for a larger life and a better service in the kingdom of God.

The Way to the Larger Glory

If we may take up the history of the eminent saints of God in every age of the Church, we shall see that they have passed through these trials in coming to a revelation of the larger glory of His presence.

IV. *In this Cleft the believer is given a protecting shield.*

It was given to Moses; it was God's own hand placed over his eyes that he might not be overwhelmed with the fulness of God's presence. In other words, He was giving Moses all that he was able to receive. This protecting shield indicates God's purpose to protect us, not only from evil, but from the overwhelming fulness of Himself, seeing in

our weakness we cannot endure the full glory of heaven. We cannot bear to see the noonday's sun in all its splendor with the natural eye, but with a piece of smoked glass the natural eye may behold its beauty and glory. This may be the explanation of the fact that real Christians can endure so much suffering, so much trial, so much disappointment, so much humiliation, and yet live. This may be the explanation of the fact that so many heroes of the faith have been able to face death and to go down under the executioner's hand and yet without fear. This may be the explanation of the fact that the timid and shrinking women of the Christian faith have passed over the river, shouting the glory of God, fearing nothing. Feasting upon God, His strength becomes our strength. This is the only possible explanation of the heroism and endurance of many of the saints who have passed on before, and it will be the hope of as many as shall follow.

Resting in the Cleft of the Rock

V. *Resting in this Cleft of the Rock and under the presence of this protecting hand, Jesus manifests Himself to us according to our desire, and our capacity to receive.*

This glorious life is not for men and women who live in a backslidden condition, who do not pray, who do not believe God, and who do not wait upon Him.

The heart with the one burning desire to know God shall be given entrance into the fuller glory of the divine life. It is true, when Moses said, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," God said, "No man can see me and live." That may mean that no man can see God and live the selfish life. It is related of one of the old saints, that when hungering and thirsting after God, he read this statement which God made to Moses, and when he realized its meaning, he said, "Then let me die." That is the kind of longing that will win the presence of the Lord. The death of the

self-life must precede the fullest revelation of the inner glory.

Waiting Before the Lord

This waiting upon God is not child's play. It means earnest seeking; it means agonizing in prayer; it means waiting before God for the enduement of the Spirit. He who is so busy with this life and its affairs that he can give only a few minutes for waiting before God, cannot receive this fuller revelation of the divine presence—cannot know of the peace and joy which flood the soul of him who is standing in the Cleft of the Rock, that he may see God by the eye of faith. Spending a moment in prayer by the bedside night and morning is better than nothing of the kind, but that will never bring the visions of God to the soul.

We may learn a lesson of great value to the Christian if we will but recall the fact that Moses was on the mount for six days before the Lord spoke to him. Think of it, six days waiting for God to speak—six days pleading for the

revelation of His presence, for the fulness of His joy! Contrast the ordinary believer spending two minutes in the morning and two minutes in the evening by his bedside in prayer, with Moses' six days on the mountain top waiting for God, and we shall see clearly why it is that so few ever pass through these larger experiences of the divine life. Many of us fail in life as Christians, because we wait so little upon God. Well did Isaiah say (40:31):

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Why We Know so Little of God

We know so little of God, not because we have not the opportunity to know Him, but because we wait in His presence so little.

In Exodus 24: 15-18, we read:

"And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And

Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."

From this experience of Moses, we may learn that revelations of this kind come to only two classes:

First. To *praying* people—those who wait on the Lord, not for two minutes, not for five minutes, not for an hour, not for a day, but till He comes—till the answer is given.

Second. Only to praying people who get *acquainted* with God through a careful study of His Word. This is the way of victory in the Christian life. It is not by any power or might of our own, but by the power of God manifested in us, as before Him we yield ourselves to His spirit.

Not Displeasure But Development

We must not construe the hardships and trials and sorrows and disappointments as marks of God's displeasure against us, but rather as a method of treatment and development for the trusting soul. *

* See Hebrews 12: 6-11.

In South America we are told there is a flower which can be seen only when the wind blows severely. How like true piety in the believer! Some of us never show the beauty of the Lord's presence until under the tests of the winds of temptation and trial and disappointment and sorrow—then the beauty of the flower of our faith and love and hope is seen. Life's burdens often show the beauty of human character. It is God's way, and that is enough. Under God

"'Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up,
Whose golden rounds are our calamities,
Whereon our firm feet planting, nearer God
The spirit climbs, and hath its eyes unsealed."

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THE CALL OF MOSES

When taking a journey by train, we are not required to understand the working of its engine. It suffices that those whose business it is to control the machinery should be able to manipulate it. And so, on the journey of life, it is not necessary for us to be able to grasp the mysteries of God in order to serve Him by loving our neighbors, and contributing our small share toward making the world what he would have it be.—Olive Linnell.

CROSSING THE BROOK AT SUNRISE.

"Then His truth broke like a flood."

Few of nature's scenes are more inviting and pleasing than a glorious sunrise. Who ever saw a sunrise at sea but to remember it as one of the most magnificent displays of glory upon which his eyes ever looked? Who ever ascended to the mountain top of some Himalayan range to see the sun rise from the very depths of infinite space, but that he came down with a conception of glory of which he had never before dreamed—and ever after his soul was ravished with the richness and splendor of that glorious morning? But there is a sunrise in the heart that surpasses all of nature's glories, and leaves an impress upon the man within, never to be forgotten. It was this sort of a sunrise that Jacob beheld in the morning of the greatest crisis of his life. We read of it in Gen. 32: 31—

"And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him."

A study of this most interesting event in the life of one of the most interesting men, named in all the annals of history, may afford us a season of refreshing as we journey along the pilgrim way of life.

Crossing the Jabbok

There had been an old grudge between the two brothers since the day when Jacob robbed his brother Esau of his birthright. They had been long separated! Alas, what pain wrong-doing has brought to human hearts! Now, after years of separation, they are about to meet again. Jacob seems greatly disturbed. Sin in a man's life is always a disturbing element. Jacob is distressed because he fears the anger of his brother. Hoping to appease Esau's anger, he sends a valuable present on ahead. It is the night before, their expected meeting was likely to come the next morning. That night he was to cross over Jabbok.

Alone With God

He sent his family over the brook in advance of his own coming. Jacob wished to be alone. Most men do when they are earnestly seeking to get right with God and their fellows whom they have wronged. It was a moment of heart-searching. He was feeling his way back to God in the darkness. He was reaching out, if perchance, he might find God and get reconciliation with his brother. As he prayed he realized the presence of a man as one wrestling with him. It was a moment of supreme testing, although Jacob held his own well till toward the breaking of the coming day, when the angel saw that he was not prevailing against Jacob. Jacob was strong and full of resistance. Then the angel touched the hollow of his thigh and put his limb out of joint, but Jacob yet refused to let him go. True, he was wounded, but he was full of courage, and when the angel pleaded to be allowed to go, Jacob declared he would not let him go except he should first bless him.

A Significant Change

Then the angel wished to know his name. "Jacob," was the prompt answer. Then the mysterious stranger said:

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Then Jacob wished to know his name, but the angel said,

"Wherefore dost thou ask after my name?"

At that moment Jacob received the blessing for which he was seeking. He was in ecstasy! His soul was reveling in glory. God had spoken and the light had dawned. At once Jacob called the name of that place *Penuel,* for he said, "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." Though he had not yet met Esau, he had the answer—the assurance that Esau should not destroy his life. No wonder Jacob was in ecstasy! And just as he was saying the words, we are told that he passed over Penuel and the rising sun burst upon his vision in all of its glory, a beautiful

symbol of the rising of the light divine in his own heart.

A Marvel of Glory—Face to Face With God!

What marvels of glory burst upon his vision as he moved on to meet and reconcile his offended brother! Many another man might have the sun rise in his soul, if like Jacob, he would earnestly and truly seek reconciliation with the persons he has wronged. God help us all to do this good work, if indeed it to-day remains undone. It is the price of peace—the peace which passeth understanding.

In the journey of Jacob from the home of Laban to meet his brother Esau he passed through mental cyclones, not one, but many. That journey in some striking way illustrates the journey of all men who from the scenes of wrong-doing go out to seek after God, and as such it may become an instructive lesson for us all.

Pausing Along the Way

In the journey Jacob had four noted stopping-places. We might call them stations along the way. If we mistake

not, each station has its lessons for all who inquire after God.

Bethel was the first station.

It was the place of *awakening.* Jacob had dealt severely with Esau. The act had involved himself in sin. From this he must be delivered, and to this end God met him at Bethel in a dream, and in that dream there were such manifestations of the divine presence as to awaken the transgressor—he began to see himself as guilty of the sin of supplanting his brother. God was dealing with him, and so positively that Jacob knew it. When he awoke the impressions of the dream were so deep and positive that he found himself saying—

"Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not."

After a moment's reflection, he said to himself—

"How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,"

and he called the place Bethel, for there he had been awakened to a sense of his sins.

Mahanaim was the second station.

It was the place where he met the angels, or the messengers. Here they both camped. Hence it was the place of the two camps. In this incident is embodied a very beautiful thought. Jacob having started on a journey in the right direction, God sent the angels to him, indicating the divine support in his effort now to make the wrongs of the past right. This thought is confirmed from another standpoint in the instance of the temptation of Jesus. After Jesus had withstood the tempter under the test of great hunger, the devil left him, and then the angels came and ministered unto him. So it seems in every noble effort to withstand wrong, we have the support of God. What an inspiration to the weary and burdened ones in their search for God! Every soul sincerely returning to God by forsaking the sins of the past comes to Mahanaim in his journey—the place where divine support is given, enabling the penitent one to continue the upward and onward journey toward God.

Jabbok was the third station.

Jabbok means the flowing brook, a beautiful symbol of the work of regeneration in which the sins of the penitent are washed away. He is cleansed and so comes nearer to God, even the nearness of partaking of the divine nature (See 1 Peter 1: 4). It was here at the flowing brook of Jabbok that the great struggle took place between Jacob and the angel. It was here that Jacob prevailed and got for himself a new life and a new name. From this place of a struggle Jacob arose in the early morning and bravely continued his journey, seeking to meet his brother Esau, and as he journeyed he came to—

Penuel, the fourth station in this journey.

Here he saw God face to face, and as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, flooding his way with the glory of its light. How beautifully like the coming of the light to the soul which has left all to follow Jesus. It is the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, coming in all of His glory to give a glad

welcome to the wanderer as he comes back to the Father.

This fourth station in the journey of Jacob is as far ahead of Jabbok as was that place ahead of Mahanaim, or as Mahanaim was ahead of Bethel. It is the outline of a progressive experience in which the seeking soul is led nearer and yet nearer to God, till at the last station he is flooded with the light of God—it is

Sunrise in the Heart

Many have deceived themselves by supposing that they could make this journey without stopping at each station—that they could go on to Penuel, to the sunrise in the heart as the first and only station, but not so. God has lessons for the penitent to learn at Bethel, and till these are learned he is not prepared for the teaching which awaits him at Mahanaim. He must take his lessons only where they are given and where he is best qualified to receive them. It was so with Jacob. At Bethel he was awakened to see his true situation before God. At

Mahanaim he was shown the power of God to give him support as he pressed on to the light. At Jabbok he was taught the mystery of the new life. Till this moment he had not been prepared to know the meaning of Jabbok. The lessons at Bethel and at Mahanaim were necessary to the understanding of the truth given him at Jabbok, just as the lesson at Jabbok prepared him to receive the instruction God had for him at Penuel. Having received the light in each progressive step, he was now ready for the rising of the sun, for the flooding of his soul with the light of God in which he might go on and on, doing the will of God, to the end of his life. If Jacob had never made an effort to be at peace with his brother, this fulness of light he would never have received, and Jacob at best would have remained Jacob, the supplanter, ever contending for place and power among men.

Onward and Upward

Having yielded to the call of God, he was led onward and upward from glory to glory, till standing in the full blaze

of victory he was "face to face with God," the highest achievement known to man in the earthly life.

"Lord, lead me on to higher ground,
Oh, lift me up, and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's table-land;
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Are you seeking to have the sun rise in your heart? Then follow God's leading through Bethel (awakening); through Mahanaim (meeting the messengers of truth); and over Jabbok (flowing, cleansing), where the most momentous event in your life will come (the fight of faith), where, prevailing with God as Jacob did, you may pass over the spiritual Jabbok and at Penuel greet the rising of your spiritual sun, and in the light thus given, see God face to face—it will be the coming of the fulness of the new life in Christ. If the believer is to come into possession of this exalted life, then he must have the praying spirit as did Jacob, when he resolutely said to the angel, with whom he wrestled:

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen. I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing—the way to heaven, how to land on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a Book! O give me that Book! At any price, give me that Book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book.—John Wesley.

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JACOB AT BETHEL

The "common things" of life are all so dear—
A half-blown rose may brighten a day,
Much more the word of cheer you remembered to say,
One look, with all one look may mean
Of love and hope, deep-felt and not unseen—
It fills with wine the cup of the soul,
In its struggle to live—and live to life's goal.
To be, means most to trust, not fear,
For recompense in life's "little things" so dear.

—Mary Ettah Calhoun.

NO CRADLE ROCKING IN THE PULPIT.

"An Ehud inspires a Shamgar."

The Prophet Ezekiel speaks of men who daub a wall with untempered mortar. The reference is undoubtedly to men who are unfaithful as teachers of truth and righteousness. Untempered mortar! That will not hold when the storm tests it. It was a criticism of the preachers of his day. The question now is, not what the prophets of old did, but what are we doing to-day to merit such criticism? Do we not bring this criticism upon ourselves by the preaching we give to the people? Do our sermons lack in virility of gospel truth? Are we afraid to declare the whole counsel of God? Afraid, lest we offend some leading member of the church we are serving? Did you ever think of it as a fact in your ministry, if we avoid offending a man, who is living in sin, that we shall thereby offend God and so imperil our own salvation,

as well as that of the men and women to whom we preach? This tendency is not only human, it is awfully human, and a shame to the ministry. If we have not backbone enough to declare to the people their sins, let us quit the ministry and go to plowing corn. Of all men among men, the minister needs to be the gentlest, the truest, the most humble, the most faithful, and at the same time, the most courageous. He needs to realize that his message is not a lullaby, that it is not designed to rock people to sleep, but rather to arouse them and to bring them out of the sleep of sin to real life in Christ. If the minister understands his business, he knows that he has a message from God to sinful men—men who stand in danger of the judgment. So instead of seeking to let men down in an easy way, he needs to face them with their sins, as did Nathan, the prophet, when he faced David with the great sin of his life. That is the way to bring men to repentance and to life in Christ. We can never do it by whitewashing a man's conscience—never!

No Weakling Can Serve

In no age of the world has God sent His message to men through one who was possessed of a man-fearing spirit. He cannot use a coward to fight sin! God wants a man who is daring enough to obey—to do what He tells him to do, one who will dare to make His "message clear and plain to sinful men."

One of the bravest of God's messengers of the long ago may serve as a good example for us of to-day. In the days of Israel, God's people went into sin, and as a rebuke to them, He permitted Eglon, a king of a neighboring nation, to place them in bondage. After eighteen long years of subjugation, they repented of their sins and cried to God for deliverance. To deliver them, He must remove Eglon, their oppressor, but to do this He must have a man who was not afraid to do His bidding. For this purpose He raised up Ehud, a left-handed man, to be His special messenger to Eglon. He gave him a message to this king, and so impressed Ehud with the responsibility of that

message that he felt he must deliver it, though he well knew to do so might mean the loss of his own life. Under this impulse he went to Eglon, king of Moab, but his first visit did not seem to accomplish its purpose, but nothing daunted, he returned, and going alone, except he had the presence of God with him, he went directly into the presence of the king, and said to him:

"I have a message from God unto thee."

At once the king commanded his attendants to retire, and when the two were alone, face to face, Ehud drew from under his raiment over his right thigh, a dagger and stabbed to death the king who for eighteen long years had kept the people of God in bondage. Then he retired, locking the door behind him, and escaped. The Word tells us that Ehud was raised up for this very purpose. It seems that the average man is not equal to the great tasks of God, and so He raises up special men for deeds of daring.

The Called Man Is Equipped

A man thus called to do the Lord's work is equipped from on high, and will dare to do whatever God may command. Herein we get a great lesson for the ministry of the twentieth century. God cannot, and will not, use a man in the ministry who is afraid to tell the truth as God may direct him to do. God cannot and will not use a man who seeks to rock the people to sleep with a soothing message, when the call is to do great things for God in awakening the people to a sense of their sins. Then a man who has a message from God cannot afford to rock the cradle. He needs rather, like Ehud, to declare that he has a message from God for the people, and then deliver it, leaving the matter of what is to follow in the hands of God—knowing that He will take care of His own.

In studying Ehud's message and act, let us bring it to bear upon our own life-work as ministers.

Observe the nature of the message Ehud gave.

It was a message of life and death—to the king it was a message of death, because he had grievously sinned against the people of God. From a spiritual point of view, that is the nature of the message God sends through us to-day. It is a matter of life and death. Its rejection is followed by death. No greater responsibility was ever laid upon the heart of man than such a message to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Observe the preparation of the messenger sent of God.

There was no man qualified to fill the place. Because of this God raised up Ehud. The first thing Ehud did was to prepare himself for his work.

God had made him left-handed, contrary to what most men would have supposed a necessity. Then Ehud made a dagger, and concealing it under his garment on his right side, he went to the king.

No Rocking of the Cradle in the Pulpit

Ehud studied the situation, after which he sent his men away; and, alone,

he went into the presence of the king. Being left-handed, he had buckled the dagger on his right thigh. Ehud did not go to King Eglon with the thought of rocking him to sleep as a babe in his cradle. He had no lullaby for that king. He appeared in his presence, and said:

"I have a message from God unto thee."

And at once Eglon, King of Moab, was slain and Israel was delivered from the power of her enemies. No weakling could have been used to do such work. It took a man who had been called and qualified, a man who was brave, even daring, a man who preferred to be faithful to every other privilege—he went into the presence of the king and delivered his message.

Observe the character of the message.

It was the most terrible of all messages, that of death. A great sin had been committed. Israel had been in bondage for eighteen years. Eglon would not let up in his persecution of the people of God. In this moment of desperation, Israel cried

unto God for deliverance, and God was ready, for He had prepared Ehud, and as God's messenger, Ehud strikes Israel's oppressor down.

A Message of Holy Daring

The minister's should always be a message of holy daring, and it should be faithfully delivered. Let not the minister fear the face of man. Not only his own welfare, but the welfare of the people is wrapped up in his faithfulness to his trust. Under these circumstances the man who seeks to "rock the cradle" in the pulpit is a traitor to God.

The fate of Eglon is warning to wrong-doers.

God's care over Israel is but His promise to His people for all lands and for all ages. To the people who cry to God in deepest sincerity there shall come deliverance. He will not suffer His enemies to destroy them. If need be, the message shall be a message of death, rather than leave His dependent ones in the hands of their persecutors. The wicked man is as truly in the hands

of God and at His mercy as any other. Let the minister learn from Ehud's success that God is with him whom He has sent. Never mind as to the difficulty in the way; never mind as to the danger by which he is surrounded, only let him be sure that he has *a message from God,* and then be faithful in delivering it, for God will not let a message He sends return unto Him void. It must accomplish that for which He has sent it.

Observe the boldness of Ehud.

He went in open day into the king's home, where he was surrounded by his attendants. With such a terrible mission he stood in the king's presence with none to support him except the God who sent him. He knew if he failed, death would be his only portion, and, hampered, as he was, he moved forward with the courage of a Spartan, delivered his message, and did his work. That was no "rocking the cradle," it was no "lullaby song," it was not the performance of a weakling. It was the work of one commissioned from heaven.

Was It Murder or More?

But did not Ehud murder Eglon? Some so regard it, but it was more than murder—it was the vengeance of God against a man who had dared to oppress His people. It was more—it was the answer of God to an oppressed people who had cried mightily unto Him for deliverance. It was simply the execution of an old and hardened criminal, one who, though often reproved, had stiffened his neck and hardened his heart, refusing to obey God—he was suddenly destroyed. Eglon had been found guilty, and Ehud was God's messenger to execute the penalty. Even so in the work of the Christian ministry! Sometimes ministers are judged to be harsh messengers, are denounced because of their message, are refused recognition because of their faithfulness! But the man who stands true to God, and the highest and best interest of His people, must deliver the message God has given him, no matter what the consequences may be. This principle has been often illustrated. We find its

execution upon Cain, upon the people in the time of Noah, upon Pharaoh, upon Ahab, upon Solomon, upon Belshazzar, upon Herod; everywhere, when men refuse to yield to God, death is the penalty. Though the message be one of terror, the minister dare not fail, for when the minister fails to do God's bidding, then he involves himself in the same penalty and loses all. To-day there is a message from God for the people.

It Is a Question of Faithfulness

The ministry is charged with the solemn duty of faithfully delivering that message. The question for every individual who thus bears the message of God is one of *faithfulness*. He must deliver the message and leave the result with God. The minister stands with Ehud and declares to the people:

"I have a message from God unto thee."

Do you ask what is the message of the minister to the people in this the twentieth century?

I answer—

A Message of Repentance and Reconciliation.

It seems almost as if repentance has gone out of fashion in human society, even largely so in the Church, but it is ever the warning message from heaven. The message of Jesus Christ Himself comes thundering down through the ages to men and women everywhere:

"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

He emphasizes the importance of this message, when He says:

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The importance of this message of repentance cannot be overestimated, for if there be no repentance, there will be no forgiveness, and if there be no forgiveness, there can be no salvation. How terrible is the responsibility of being such a messenger! How fearful will be the punishment meted out to the man who accepts the place of God's messenger and then proves untrue to it!

"We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

That was the plea of Paul. It is the plea of the minister, as he gives this message to the lost in every age. Paul assured the people in his day that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. If the ministry shall be *unfaithful* to this message, then reconciliation cannot be effected, and both minister and people will come under the judgment of God. It is not a lullaby message. The minister has not time to "rock the cradle," that he may put people to sleep in their sins. His is a different work. The people must be awakened. They must be made to realize the enormity of sin and the coming of a fearful judgment to them who believe not the gospel.

The Urgency of the Minister's Plea

Let the minister cry:

"This is the message that I bring,
A message angels fain would sing:
'Oh, be ye reconciled to God!'"

A Message of Faith.

It is seemingly coming to pass in this day of "intellectualism" that men assume to depend upon what they

know, rather than upon what they *believe*—rather than upon their faith in God. We are more ready in many instances to believe man than to believe God. Forget not this is the Word of God,

"Believe on Him that sent me."

Christian faith is the father of more victories than all human learning has yet produced, apart from divine power. It has reached down to the depths of human society, and it has lifted the lowest heavenward, under the transforming grace of God.

"He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life."

Salvation itself is dependent on our faith. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, and by faith the powers of sin are broken and the victory of grace is given.

A Message of Appeal Unto God.

We do not hear much of this crying unto God for deliverance from sin. In olden time men cried:

"What must I do to be saved?"

It was the power of the preached Word that made sinners quake and tremble. That power fully manifested among men will bring crime to an end. When men feel the power of God upon them, when they are made to see themselves as lost sinners, there is no trouble about getting them to cry unto God for deliverance. When Israel had been eighteen years in bondage to Eglon, their cry was mighty before God, Ehud was sent, and Israel was speedily delivered from her enemies.

A Message of Service and Love.

The minister's message in this twentieth century to men and women who have been brought into the light of God, is a message of service and of love, as well as warning. Jesus said:

"If any man will serve me, him will my Father honor."

That is a great promise and a great reward offered. These are the facts of the minister's message to men to-day. Some men like to be "rocked to sleep" in their sins by a "milk-and-water" message, which means nothing, but the

man who truly realizes what his situation is, as he stands in the depths of sin, will not wish any such gush of meaningless words—he wants the plain message of God that he may believe and live forever.

The True Minister a Man of Courage

Of all men the minister must be a man of courage, or his will become the message of a weakling, and under such preaching the people will perish, and the minister will be responsible.

Oh, brother minister, dare you take a stand—dare you say, and mean it, by God's grace,—

"I will dare to be a Daniel,
I will dare to stand alone!
I will dare to have a message—
I will dare to make it known!"

No Uncertain Sound

Wouldst thou have thy life the brighter?
Make another's burden lighter.
Wouldst thou know the joy of living?
Find it by the grace of giving.
Wouldst thou precious seeds be sowing?
Blossoms bloom, thou still unknowing.
Wouldst thou golden grain be reaping?
Trust the harvest to God's keeping.
Wouldst thou lose all fear of dying?
Each day live—on Him relying.

—Helen Elizabeth Coolidge.

A REVOLUTION EXTRAORDINARY.

"Thou shalt be turned into another man."

It is a great day in Israel—a crisis is upon their government. They have been ruled by the judges—judges given of God. But the day has come when human nature clamors to be heard—asserts itself above the command of God. Israel is calling for a king to rule over them. God has forewarned them of what their demand would mean to them. He has told them of the evils of monarchy, but they said, "We want a king; we want to be like other people." At last He yielded to the extent of permitting them to have a king, and Saul was chosen. The hour for his anointing as king has come. Samuel is making ready for the imposing ceremony. Turning to Saul, he said:

"And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee....and thou shalt be turned into another man."

So much for the beginning of the kingdom of Israel. Its history is

familiar to Bible readers—there is no need to follow the details.

Two things are emphatic in the narrative:

First, Saul's preparation for his service as king could never have been complete till the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.

Second, When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, Samuel said Saul should be turned into another man—he would no more be the Saul of the past, but a new Saul, qualified of God and sent to do a specific work.

The Spirit Changes the Man

Let us notice upon what the preparation of Saul depended—the coming of the Spirit of God upon him. Let us also notice the effect—Saul became another man. Is there not a hint here of the coming of men and women to the day of their anointing, when they shall receive power from God and be changed from the carnal to the spiritual man?

Saul was coming to a new kingdom. He was to be king. He was to rule for the good of the people and for the glory

of Jehovah. The parallel appears when we think of men and women coming to God as His servants to receive the divine anointing in the kingdom of the spiritual life. Here a true servant finds the realm of his largest usefulness and of his highest joys.

The changing of a life into another life is of the highest importance to every individual. Saul must have this change wrought of the Spirit of God, before he could become the Lord's servant in this new sphere. It is just as true of men and women to-day that before they can enter upon the largest sphere of God's service, they must be endued with power from on high, the Spirit of the Lord must come upon them, changing them from a cold-hearted life to a life warm and glowing with the life of Christ.

A Radical Difference

Let us observe that when a man is changed, spiritually, he becomes a new man. Character in the new man is radically different from character in the old man. This wonderful work is

wrought of God that men may come into possession of the larger gifts of the Spirit. It is nothing less than a change to what we know as the higher life. This is what was meant when it is said that Saul should be changed into another man, for we read in verse nine that God gave him another heart. After all, the heart-life is the main issue in this probationary state. If the heart is changed, the life is changed. If the heart be not changed, no matter how much profession of change there may be, there will be no change of life. Sometimes men are led to profess a change of heart when nothing has been done for them. That is always disastrous. A false profession can never lay a sure foundation. An impure heart offers inducements for the indwelling presence of the wicked one, just as a pure heart becomes the abiding-place of the Spirit. There is all the difference possible between the heart that is filled with the Spirit and the heart that is either empty, or in possession of the wicked one.

May Not Cast Out Evil Return?

Some man asked Mr. Moody once if when the house was cleansed—Matt. 12: 43-50—there was not a chance for the wicked one to return and again occupy it. Mr. Moody said, "It is possible, for if you send the devil out by a mere pledge, or by a resolution in your own strength, he will come back. He will come to the front door and say, 'Is there anybody inside?' If no answer is given him, he will then go around to the back door and cry, 'Is there anybody inside?' If silence is still the answer, he knows that Christ is not there. Then he will smash the door open and walk in through all your resolutions, bringing seven devils with him, and each worse than himself, and he will fill your heart with the riot of sin. On the other hand, if the heart has been truly cleansed by the power of God, and Christ has come in to live there, then when the devil asks, 'Is anybody inside?' Christ will say, 'I AM HERE,' and the power of His presence will drive the wicked one away, and the pursued soul will have victory over the tempter."

Deliverance and Dedication

But some men will say, "How can this all be done?" To the blind this seems impossible, but to one whose eyes have been opened to see the truth in its beauty, it is plain enough that this wonderful change of the heart is wrought by the Spirit of God, and the new man thus formed is mighty, not in himself, but through God, to the pulling down of the stronghold of sin. The incoming of the new life means specially two things to every believer—*deliverance* from the self-life and the *dedication* of the new life to God. Some people shrink from this abandonment of the self-life, and some people fear to dedicate themselves wholly to the service of God, but these things only indicate the continued presence of the evil one, rather than the fulness of the divine life. Deliverance from the power of sin and dedication of the whole life to God—these are the urgent needs of the life of the believer. This thought rested heavily upon the mind of Paul when he said:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies

a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

The fruit of such deliverance from selfishness and such dedication to God is non-conformity to the world. Rather it means a transforming and a renewing of the man for the largest service, according to the perfect will of God.

The Gain of the New Life

But some men will say, What is the gain from passing from the old life to the new? There is much every way.

The new man gains a new life. The new life gains a new capacity. The new capacity is endowed with new power. The new power works in a new sphere and does a new service, which brings forth a greatly enlarged fruitfulness in the kingdom of God.

It may be said that while this is possibly true of Saul and other great men, it cannot be true of the ordinary men and women of our day. That is wrong. God's gifts are for the common people, just in proportion as they will qualify themselves to receive them. True, in the text it was for a king, but remember

that when the old man is made new in Christ he comes to possess a kingly character and therefore is entitled to the very best gifts of our heavenly Father.

Certainly Peter understood it in this way, for in his First Epistle (2:9) he says:

"But we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

A Kingly Character

What a change the grace of God thus works! Every man who is truly changed by the Spirit becomes not only kingly in character, but he enters into a royal priesthood for the service of God. This but brings out the idea, already suggested, that when men are changed by the power of God, they cease to be of the old nature and become kings and priests unto God. Surely a royal priesthood must have some reference to a kingly life. The true Christian

has a kingly life, because it is made after the pattern of the King of kings and Lord of Lords. Nor is Peter alone in this estimate of the kingly qualities of the Christian life: John also takes a similar view, as we find by reference to Revelation 5: 9, 10, where, in speaking of the work of the redeemed, he says:

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Reigning With Christ

What does he mean by reigning on the earth with Him? We are to inherit kingdoms. What would a kingdom be without a king? Blessed thought, we are to reign with Christ!

The anointing of Saul was but the preparation for the larger service to which God had called him. In this is indicated to us the thought that we, too, are called to a new kingdom, to a new spiritual life, in which great service is

demanded, and for which we must be anointed of God.

The liberty of the spirit-endowed man is the most priceless inheritance of the sons of light. It sets us free from the bondage of the law, and the ways of sinful man, setting us at liberty to do the will of God. George MacDonald said:

"So long as God's will is our law, we are slaves, but when God's will becomes our will, duty becomes pleasure, and service a delight."

Surely this is a glorious liberty of the sons of God.

One Thing Is Settled

One thing is settled, we must be born again, we must become new men under the Spirit. Then we must be endued with the spirit of service. So Jesus Himself taught. See John 7:38, 39. There are many good things in the lives of men. A creed, morality, culture, good works, even worship and good feeling, but none of these can make us Christians. They are, in so far as genuine, the outgrowth of the Christ within. They speak of a work that

Jesus has done within. Christianity is the process of a new birth. We are born out of the world of flesh into the kingdom of the Spirit. With the new birth all these things contribute to the development of this life, but without the new birth all these are failures, for we cannot pass into the spiritual life, except as God changes the natural man into the spiritual.

"A dear one in heaven thy heart yearns to see,
At the beautiful gate may be watching for thee;
Then list to the note of this solemn refrain,
'Ye must be born again.'"

Each day a clean white page, and we are artists whose duty it is to put something beautiful on the pages one by one; or we are historians, and must give to the page some record of work or duties or victory to enshrine and carry away.
—Phillips Brooks.

IMPLORING

GOD'S FINGERS

"During a revival service a man prayed for the conversion of a neighbor and said: 'O Lord, touch my neighbor with Thy finger, with Thy finger, O Lord.' Just then an inner voice said: 'You are God's finger. Did you ever speak to your neighbor concerning his soul's salvation? You go and touch the man and your prayer shall be heard!' The man arose. His conscience was awakened and accused him. Almost a lifetime had he lived near his neighbor, and not once had he spoken to him about the need of regeneration. Hundreds of opportunities came and went, but the conversation at such times was not about the one thing needful, but about the weather, politics, crops, business, etc. The first duty of a Christian, to witness for Christ, was left unfulfilled. How is it with you?"

A MIRACULOUS MODE OF COMMUNICATION.

"The Lord made him understand."

Marvelous phenomena abound everywhere. Every age thinks the inventive genius of man has reached its limit. Almost a hundred years ago a Patent Department official, thinking nothing more would likely be invented, and rather than have the department die on his hands, resigned. If he could rise from the grave and behold the wonders of inventive genius since that day, he would laugh at the fears which drove him from office. Alas! How liable to err is human judgment!

We have few greater wonders than modern methods of communication. Even in these there is rapid development and large gains. Our postal service was once a wonder, as a means of communication between men. This was eclipsed by the Morse telegraph, and later by the telephone, through

which persons could converse for hundreds of miles. Then came Fessenden and Marconi with their wireless telegraphy, astounding the world by sending messages great distances through the air. Now even the wireless must take a back seat, since the wireless telephone has given man power to hear the human voice at a distance of practically five thousand miles.

It Surpasses All Others

Truly the age rolls on, but wonders do not cease, especially in the matter of wonderful and rapid systems of communication among men. But in the face of the wonders of modern communication there is an ancient method which surpasses them all. It is given to us in Chron. 28: 19, which reads:

"All this, said David, the Lord made me to understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."

David was referring to the pattern and specifications which God had given him for building the temple. As a method of communication it far surpasses all human inventions. Indeed,

that text is one of the most remarkable passages in the Bible—it is an enigma to all human comprehension.

Strange as it may seem, though God gave David the pattern for building a house of rest for the ark, yet because he had been a man of war and bloodshed, he was not allowed to build—he must needs turn the pattern and specifications over to his son, Solomon, to do the work. The text is David's explanation to Solomon, as to how he got these —the Lord gave it to him by writing with His hand upon David's body.

A Marvel of Marvels

We can believe in the sign alphabet, as a means of communication between the dumb; we can believe in the raised letter for the blind; we can believe in the call of signals, as between ships at sea; we can believe in the practical workings of the telegraph and of the wireless, and in the wireless telephone, but it staggers the faith of the average man to be told that God gave David the plans for that great building by writing with His hand upon his mind and heart.

How easy it is to believe in the ingenuity of man, and yet how hard, how difficult, to grasp the thought of God and accept it as truth! The thought of that text is worth careful study:

I. *The Fact of God's Writing Upon the Human Heart.*

That God has a method of communication with the believer, Christians must admit. The thought may be a mystery, but mysteries are facts, notwithstanding. God has a way of writing upon the human mind which cannot be questioned. Man is very dependent on God for his understanding of all moral and spiritual ideas. That God can adapt His thought to our understanding, either by the illumination of the Word for us, or by the impressions made upon us by His Spirit, may be marvelous, but Christians cannot doubt the fact.

II. *How Is This Writing of God Wrought Upon the Mind and Heart of Man?*

David said God did it by His hand upon him. This is adapting the thought

of the invisible to the language of every-day usage, that we may the more readily grasp the divine idea. Thus God enriches the mind and heart. To be assured of God's presence, giving to us His message, is the highest privilege of the believer in the earthly life. It was after this manner that He gave to David the pattern of the temple—gave it in writing upon his person by the divine hand. Marvelous, but true!

Written With the Hand of God

As David understood this mystery, the hand of God traced the very letters upon David's consciousness, spelling out word by word God's specifications for building the temple.

The very thought amazes us, but is anything too hard for God? Did not God write a message of warning upon the walls of Belshazzar's palace? And may He not just as easily and readily write a message upon a human heart which has been fully yielded to Him? Do you ask why God did not write upon Belshazzar's heart, instead of the walls of the palace? Most likely because Bel-

shazzar's heart was not only blind, but hardened. A stone wall is as susceptible to an impression from God as is the heart of a hardened and resisting sinner.

III. *The Purpose of This Writing on David's Person.*

It was God's way of giving to him plans and specifications for the temple, making all so plain to him that he was able, not only to carry the thought in his own mind, but to give the pattern God had given him, to his son, Solomon, who should build the house instead of David, his father. God not only spoke to David, but to Solomon through his father.

IV. *God's Design in Having His People Understand Him.*

An understanding of truth is the foundation of all progress. If God could not make man understand His purpose, then all Christian progress would cease. We know for every life God has a work, and He is amply able to qualify us to do it, if we are teachable. Men question a fact so startling,

and yet they are believing things day by day which are more strange than God's marvelous method of communication with man. Man has shown ability to instruct the lower order of animals. The hog has been educated and so has the horse; even birds of the air can be taught by the skill and ability of man, and yet man stumbles over the fact of God's ability to impress the human mind with His own thought.

Can Man Do More Than God?

Do you think a man can do more in teaching and training a hog, a dog, a bird, or even a horse, than God can do in teaching a man and making known to him His plan for the salvation of the human family? We are told that Luther Burbank, the great California scientist, can take a tree that has been going to the bad for years, so that it has become altogether ugly and noxious and worthless, that he can take that tree and by giving it the shock of a new force, can break up its decline and its old habits and turn its energies into new

channels and bring it to new life and make it a live and fruit-bearing tree. Listen! If a man can do that, why should it be thought a thing incredible that God, the Creator of all things, can break up the old sinful life of a man and by imparting to him new and divine life recreate in him the Christ life of righteousness and holiness, and teach him how to do the will of God among men? Oh, Unbelief, in shame hide thy face forever and let us be assured that nothing is too hard for the almighty hand of God to do.

The Believer's Teacher

Let us study this thought in its bearing upon the Christian's life and service. What God did for David in building the temple, He can do for us in building the spiritual life. God told David how to build the temple. He can just as easily tell the believer how to shape his life and make it a place for the indwelling of the Spirit. Paul teaches us that the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Is not this, then, a sufficient guarantee that God gives us

the pattern of the Christian life with specific instruction as to how to build it and maintain it? Does He not by the impressions He makes upon us by His Spirit really write upon our thought, His wishes and purposes, as on a sheet of paper? Of course, this work must be done under specific conditions. The paper on which the writing is made must be of a quality well suited to receive the impressions of the pen. You cannot write on rough, spongy paper—it will not receive the work of the pen. Even so a heart rough in sin and hardened against God, cannot receive the impressions the Spirit would write thereon. Is this idea Scriptural? Does the New Testament anywhere hold up such an idea? Let us read 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10:

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Do You See the Difference?

Thus the *prepared* heart may easily receive a God-given message, while the

unprepared heart cannot grasp it at all. Man in sin is blind and deaf and unfeeling, not physically, but morally and spiritually. He lives in a dungeon of spiritual darkness. Without help there is no chance to reach the light.

As illustrating in a somewhat remote way God's dealings with His blinded children, we may use Helen Kellar, who was blind and deaf and dumb. She lived in a dungeon of darkness, not of stone, but of flesh. It did seem impossible to help that helpless child, and yet God planned the way to light for her, till to-day Helen Kellar is a very bright woman. Her early days were spent in darkness because she could not communicate with her fellows. She had ability to think, but no way to give expression to her thoughts. She tried to make signals to those about her, but she could get no response. Thus she groped her way in her helplessness. In her body was a beautiful life, but it was shut up in darkness and silence, the results of blindness, deafness, and speechlessness. In the course of time

God sent to Helen Kellar a teacher of rare ability, skill, and patience. That teacher discerned evidence of a beautiful life shut up in her afflicted body. He used his best ability to reach her imprisoned inner life. He made many experiments by way of seeking to open the doors of her life to outside thought. In feeding her, he attempted to tell her what it was she was eating. As she ate an orange, he placed his fingers upon her throat and her fingers upon his throat, and by means of the finger alphabet he spelled the word o-r-a-n-g-e. When he gave her water to drink, he did the same. One day he found her suffering pain, and he wrote upon her throat by his hand, "I love you." After a while she made the same effort, and said to him by her fingers on his hand, "I love you." It was the dawning of the light. The teacher saw victory ahead and persevered, and Helen, though blind, began to pick up new rays of light, she began to see, if not through the eye, yet through the mind. Later, Helen passed into the care and

under the instruction of a lady to whose wisdom the world is a debtor. By the means of her fingers on Helen's body the new teacher told her of the beautiful worlds of sight and sound. She told her that, notwithstanding to her it seemed as if the world were darkness and silence, yet it was full of beauty and music.

Helen was amazed and almost unbelieving, but the teacher said to her:

"Because you cannot see and hear, you must not say there are no beautiful sights and no enchanting music."

Meantime Helen was making great progress in grasping the true situation about her. One day Bishop Brooks came to visit Helen. He said to her:

"God loves you."

By signal she replied:

"I know He does, I have felt Him nigh, but didn't know who He was."

That day she gained her highest idea of the God who made her. Though blind and deaf and dumb, she went speedily from one realm of knowledge to another, and from one kingdom to another, till through the writing of the

finger upon her person by her teacher, great windows of light were opened to her darkened life. In this light she was able to answer many questions. So she went on from one subject to another till her visit to the St. Louis Exposition, when, by the marvelous gains she had made, she was able to write a glowing account of her visit and what she saw! Few women were able to write so clearly and definitely of the Exposition as did Helen Kellar—it was the outcome of the writing of a finger upon her body.

Now Miss Kellar understands much of the beauty of the stars, the mountains, the landscape, the rivers, of music, of art, of life, of time, and the coming glory of eternity. Now she goes on catching flashes of light and drinking of the fountains of love—all made possible by the writing with her teacher's finger upon her body. Suppose she should now tell of the joy that dwells in her being in this glad moment of triumph, in this victory of life and light, could she not readily and gladly say with Paul—

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things

which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us (who love Him) by His Spirit."

Light Dispels Darkness

That was a marvelous revelation which is given to all believers who yield themselves body, soul, and spirit to God.

If these glad floods of light were given to Helen Kellar as she lived in darkness by the writing of a man's hand upon her body, why may not God in His great power, goodness, and infinite mercy, deal even more lavishly in giving light to His benighted ones who seek His face and live for Him? Why not? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Surely not. Till God speaks, till He writes with His finger upon the heart, we are all as—

"An infant crying in the night—
An infant crying for the light—
And with no language but a cry!"

An Oriental Court Scene

The ever-varying beauty and loveliness of the landscape, the magnificence of the sun, moon, and stars, and the sky, in which they move, the grandeur of the mountains and the majesty and awe of the sea are all but evidences of the Spirit's artistic hand in giving shape and beauty to the creative work of God. It is not too much to say that every object in nature, animate and inanimate, which has been preserved in form and color, as it came forth in the beginning, is but an expression of the Spirit's thought of the beauty of the divine life. If we stand in a great art gallery, we are bewildered with the evidences of artistic taste, but standing in nature's hall of art, we are overwhelmed with the glory of the Spirit's finished work. All this is but the mirror of God, reflecting His matchless work in the redemption and salvation of man. The glory of the spiritual is reflected in the natural—and it is all a prophecy, a veritable foretaste of the life which is hid with Christ in God.—Kipyar.

THE BELIEVER'S UNSEEN BODY-GUARD.

"Flitting, flitting, ever near thee,
Sitting, sitting by thy side."

Have we not distorted ideas of the angels? Who are they and what is their mission? They are God's messengers among men, ministering to the heirs of salvation. Angels are interesting characters, not so much because of themselves as because of the mission on which they are sent and the work they do—protecting God's people. In Ps. 34: 7 we read:

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

David was evidently face to face with some great danger when he gave expression to his confidence in the protection of the hovering angel of the Lord. It may have been when he was exposed to the wrath of Saul in the cave of Adullam. At any rate, he had been graciously spared when in grave danger.

With the wisdom of a sage he attributed his safety to the presence and power of the angel of the Lord. That belief had long been common to the people of God.

Ruling Out the Angels

In these modern days the materialist rules out the idea of protecting angels. They no longer expect to see the evidence of their presence, nor to hear the rustle of their wings. Men and women in their mad rush for modern thought regard the talk of protecting angels as superstition. They accept the Sadducean teaching that there is no spirit, nor angel, never mind what the Bible may say. Paul was not a Sadducee. Referring to the angels in Heb. 1 : 14, he asks :

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

A Strange Scene

Nor was this doctrine common only in Bible times. In every age of the world, which has been noted for its depth of spiritual insight, God's people have been believers in the protecting presence of

the angels. The sainted Doddridge tells of a remarkable dream he once had. He seemed to be in the vestibule of heaven, and while waiting for admittance, he was in an ante-room. Certain pictures on the walls seemed strangely familiar, and so drew his close attention. He found the pictures were representing familiar incidents in his own life. One showed him falling from a horse, and just above him, as he went to the ground, was an angel following him, and so on through his life he saw picture after picture, the angel being a close attendant, protecting and keeping him from danger.

"A guardian angel o'er his life presiding,
Doubling his pleasure and his cares dividing."

Jesus believed and taught the presence of the guardian angels in life. They ministered to Him in the temptation. (Matt. 4: 11) Besides, in referring to children, He said:

"In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father."—Matt. 18: 10.

Watching and Protecting

Both the Bible and human experience confirm the thought of the angels of God

watching over and protecting the people of God in any time of peril. Some one has said:

"If you woo the company of the angels in your waking hours, they will be sure to come to you in your sleep."

Merely camping about the believer would not necessarily signify protection, but when it is added, "and delivereth them," then we get the definite idea of their blessed ministry among men.

"How sweetly did they float upon the wings of silence through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiled."

We therefore conclude that the work of ministering angels is—

I. *To Minister to the Needy.*

Jesus knew of their ministry:

"And He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him." —Mark 1: 13.

Who shall say that in the moment of need or of peril, that the angel of the Lord does not encamp about them that fear Him? We may not always be conscious of His presence, but He attends us.

"Sweet souls around us watch us still,
Press nearer to our side:
Into our thoughts, into our prayers,
With gentle helpings glide."

The mission of the angels is not to all peoples, regardless of their relationship to God—they minister to them that fear the Lord and strive to do His will—heirs of salvation.

II. *To Strengthen the Weak.*

After long continued strain, Elijah was about to give up. Just then the old prophet heard a whisper—an angel touched him and said: "Arise and eat." —1 Kings 19: 5.

Making Our Enemies Weak

It was perhaps the weakest moment in Elijah's ministry, but in that moment an angel was at his side to strengthen and help him. How wonderful is the presence of the angels of God in the moment of peril!

III. *To Make Weak Our Enemies.*

That angels should be sent to minister to the servants of God when they need to be protected and kept from danger, seems a marvelous thing, but even that seems not comparable to the more

startling fact that the ministry of angels includes the making of our enemies weak and helpless, as has often been demonstrated in the history of the people of God. It was true with Daniel in the lions' den when he declared:

"My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."

IV. *To Deliver His People From the Power of Their Enemies.*

Even Lot, though he kept his eye very largely upon business, yet when in peril, angels came to his assistance.

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife and two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of this city." —Gen. 19: 15.

Pulled Out of the Fire

Lot was reluctant to give up his home and his possessions. He hesitated, he lingered, but in the midst of his halting, the angels laid hold upon his hand, and of the hand of his wife and his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him, and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

"But all God's angels come to us disguised;
Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,

One after other lift their frowning masks,
And we behold the Seraph's face beneath,
All radiant with the glory and the calm
Of having looked upon the front of God."

Did not the angels of God deliver Lot almost under his protest? This emphasizes in a marked way the determined purpose of God to protect the heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1: 14)

Moses recounted the perils to which Israel had been exposed, and made his plea before God for help. At once (Numbers 21: 16), the answer was given:

"And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and has brought us forth out of Egypt; and behold, we are at Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border."

Life in the Border of the City

How beautiful the thought—life in the very border of the city of God. By and by we shall go into that city and occupy the place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Not only was this teaching as to the ministry of the angels believed by the people of God, but some of the ancient kings who knew but little of God came to understand the truth.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in Him."—Dan. 3: 28.

If the truth of the ministry of angels needs to be established, it would seem that Nebuchadnezzar's testimony added to that of the Bible and the people of God ought to be amply sufficient. Although not an adherent of the teachings of God, Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to admit the truth of the ministry of angels. If anything were lacking to affirm the purpose of God to protect and save His people from danger, we still have Isaiah 63: 9:

"In all their afflictions, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old."

A Blessed Relationship

This is one of the most remarkable passages in the Old Testament. It represents God in a relationship to His people which mortals can hardly grasp.

God's marvelous way of linking Himself to us in our troubles but intensifies

the thought of the certainty of His help in time of need.

The thought of being afflicted with them seems quite beyond human comprehension. This conception of God's relation to His people is sustained in the New Testament. In Acts 12: 11, we read:

"And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

Peter understood his deliverance from prison as the work of the angel of the Lord. He had no doubt about it—"Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered me."

The idea of personal protection is common in human governments. Our President rarely appears in public except that he is watched and protected by the Secret Service men. Even our Secretary of State, on his pleasant visit to Panama, was surrounded by these watchmen, whose business was to protect him from harm. When the Emperor of Germany goes out, he is accompanied by a mounted guard to protect him from his

enemies. The Czar of Russia is also protected in like manner, showing conclusively that lives which are highly prized by the people are also protected by the people. The value of the life of a king is the excuse for such protection by the governments of earth. Then what is the basis of the value which heaven places upon the life of the children of God that He should send angels to guard and protect them when in danger? John tells us in Rev. 1: 6, we are both kings and priests unto God. No wonder the secret service angels of heaven attend us and protect us!

Why Angels Minister

This may throw light upon God's reason for sending angels to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. If so, it brings into the light the great value God puts upon men and women for whom His Son gave His life. He would save from sin, from ruin, so He, too, sends the angels from heaven, to encamp round about His people and to deliver them in any moment of peril. Oh, let us sing:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

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COMFORTING THE BELIEVER

"Church of the living God,
Born of the Spirit's power,
This is the day of might,
This is the very hour;
Rise in the strength of Him,
Master of life and love;
Open the heart to take
Virtues that rise above
Common and earth-born things;
Virtues that have the breath
Of God and Heaven in them,
And fear not sin or death;
Spirit of power, we pray,
Breathe on our souls and give
Peace that Thy men may love;
Love that Thy world may live."

GOD BIDS HEZEKIAH GOOD-BYE.

"So he returned with shame of face to his own land."

Strange things occur everywhere, whether in science, philosophy, or religion. Behind these strange things, however, especially as they are related to God in His government of men, we shall always find a reason, at least when we go far enough to sound these depths of mystery. Human history marks God's pathway through the ages. Each world event indicates a stopping-place in the work of His kingdom. Among the strange things in the doings of God is His dealing with His children. We have a number of instances, illustrating this fact, as in the case of His leading Abraham out into a country of which he knew nothing; in permitting Isaac to bless Jacob instead of Esau; in having Moses reared and trained in Pharaoh's court; withholding for a time an answer to David's prayer (See Psa. 51); in Peter's fall as the highway to

his establishment in the Christian faith; in sending John to the Isle of Patmos, as a prisoner, that he might be honored with a vision from Heaven, the like of which no other human eye had seen; in allowing Jacob to see so many things as against him; in allowing Jeremiah to go to prison; John the Baptist to be beheaded; or John Bunyan to spend twelve years in Bedford jail; or John Huss to go to the stake, and the thousands of other instances, in which God's children have been led in a way they knew not, but always for good in the end. It is from this standpoint that we invite you to join us in the study of the most critical moment and event in the life of Hezekiah, one of God's favored sons, as when God bade him "good-by" and left him to fight his own battles. You may read of the incident in 2 Chron. 32:31:

"God left him, to try him, that he (Hezekiah) might know all that was in his heart."

A Good King, But—

Hezekiah had the reputation of being a good king, and of course, a good man.

His history is interesting and highly instructive, especially as it leads up to the moment when God left him.

Hezekiah had become very rich—a dangerous moment in any man's life. He had great treasures of silver and gold, precious stones, spices, and jewels; a great abundance of corn and wine and oil; great storehouses, stalls for beasts, cotes for flocks, and we are told that God gave him this great wealth, but what did the king do with his great wealth?

Hezekiah seemed to believe in doing great things. We are told, in the chapter from which the text is taken, that he stopped the upper watercourse of the Gihon and, turning its flow, he brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. In all of this great undertaking his prosperity hardly had bounds to it. With all this favor before him, how could Hezekiah forget God?

A Great Shadow

But it happened with Hezekiah, as with many others. In the day of his greatest prosperity a great shadow

came over his pathway. He was taken very ill in the midst of all of his wealth and greatness. Isaiah came to him with a message from the Lord, saying:

"Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."

The thought was crushing to the rich king. He turned his face to the wall and began to pray, weeping profusely. At this juncture the Lord sent Isaiah to Hezekiah with another message. It was this:

"I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years."

Then, as if to remove any possible doubt that He would keep His promise, He said:

"I will bring the shadows of the degrees on the sun dial of Ahaz ten degrees backward,"

and Hezekiah was restored to health. If ever there was a time for humility, gratitude, and praise to God in the life of Hezekiah, it must have been at this moment. As he thought over the hours of his extreme illness, he had a vivid recollection of the fear which then oppressed him. He describes it, saying:

"Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove."

A Great Deliverance

And then, realizing his wonderful deliverance, he cried out:

"What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me and himself hath done it."

The healing of Hezekiah had doubtless attracted great attention far and near. Among others who heard of the great event was the king of Babylon. His son, Merodach-baladan, sent Hezekiah a letter, congratulating him on his restoration to health, and at the same time and by the same hand, he sent a present to Hezekiah, who admitted that he was glad of it. Being proud of his wealth and fame, he opened all he had to the messengers who brought the letter and the present from Babylon, showing them all he had. Soon after the messengers were gone, Isaiah came to see Hezekiah. He asked him what these men had said to him and from whence they came. Hezekiah told him without reservation that they came from Babylon, but he did not tell him what they said to him.

A Startling Question

Isaiah had a mission to Hezekiah, and his first question was,

"What have they seen in thy house?"

Hezekiah answered:

"All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them."

The truth is, Hezekiah, in his great desire to glorify himself in the sight of the great men of Babylon, and to gain their favor, had failed to glorify God in the matter of his serious sickness and his wonderful recovery. He had shown the princes of Babylon everything he had, all of his treasures, all of his greatness, and all of his glory, as a king, and though the letter from Babylon had spoken of his illness, yet Hezekiah, so carried away with his own greatness and with the honor paid to him by the Babylonish government, forgot to say a word of God's great goodness to him in sparing his life and restoring him to health. In other words, selfishness had gotten the mastery of the good king. It seems quite clear that he had an overmastering desire to make

a great impression upon the princes from Babylon, with the probable thought that he might make an alliance with that government, which in case of trouble with Assyria, or with some other nation, would make him strong unto victory. God had been his strength in other days and his deliverer in the time of need, but a little attention from Babylon had seemed to induce him to forget God. It was just here that came in the incident of the text:

"God left him, to try him, that he (Hezekiah) might know all that was in his heart."

The Purpose of God's Withdrawal

Most surely God left Hezekiah in the hands of the wicked one that he might be brought to see himself in the light of Heaven—turned over to Satan that he might be awakened and saved. Even in turning the backslider over to Satan God shows His mercy. Not only is such a course necessary for the salvation of the backslidden, but quite as much so to preserve them that are whole. The poet had this in mind when he said,

"One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest."

No wonder Burns said:

"O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!"

Beyond all question the most dangerous thing in a man's life is heart-blindness—when he does not know himself, does not know what is in his heart. This was Hezekiah's condition, and it seemed as if the only thing the Lord could do to open his eyes was to leave him for a time, that he might come to know his real condition—to recognize that he was indeed backslidden.

An Awful Moment

It is an awful moment when the Lord must needs leave a man, leave him to his choice and under the powers of darkness, that he may be brought to know what is in his own heart. This is a vital matter. Heaven depends on it. If a backslider is not brought to realize his lost estate, that he has fallen from grace, that he has turned against God, he will be lost. It is with the thought of awakening the man that God does with many of us as He did with Hezekiah—He leaves us, to try us, that we

may come in the moment of trial to know that we are lost and undone through our own sin. Hezekiah must be awakened, he must come to see himself as he is, he must know what sin is in his heart. Thus God's love for His own is so great as to lead him even to turn away from a straying one that He may bring him back through repentance and faith to the ways of truth and righteousness. Indeed, Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 5: 5, that it sometimes becomes necessary to deliver a straying child over to the devil for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. David was once in such a condition. God, whom he had offended, refused to answer his prayer till he had been rescued from the power of the wicked one—till he had been brought to repentance. See Psa. 51. Men and women, dead in sin, must be awakened, or they will never come to life in righteousness, and with life they are undone forever. No doubt, there are thousands of church members to-day who have fallen into sin, as had David and Hezekiah. If the Lord

should leave them as they are, they are undone by sin. In many cases the Lord awakens them to the awful reality of sin by leaving the straying one to himself for a time, that such an one may see the awful truth that in the heart he is backslidden.

A Strange Word-Picture

In *The Ancient Mariner* there is one of the strangest pictures. At first one is tempted to feel that there is nothing like it in all the world, but there is. Its counterpart is often found in a church. Coleridge, in one part of that wonderful story, represents a ship at sea with the seamen all dead, and yet rising up to man the ship—there were dead men hauling the ropes, dead men steering the ship, dead men spreading the sails. You may declare that was but a poetic fancy, but I declare I have seen churches that remind me of this strange dream of the imagination. I have seen men who seemed to be spiritually dead in the pulpit, in the choir, among the church officers, in the membership, the deacons seemed dead, and often dead

men and women seemed to be sitting in the pews. Now what is the difference between those two scenes? Only this, one was a poet's picture, while the other is so frequently a reality in many of our churches. Do you ask, Why does God leave us under such trying circumstances? It looks as if he sees it as His only chance to reach us and bring us back to our spiritual senses and to Himself. He is not confined to any one way of truly reaching us, but it seems to be more often than otherwise by the way of suffering that He brings us back. Men and women are most commonly reached by *refining and purifying.* Hence we read in Mal. 3:3—

"And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

Through the Purifying Fires

That reveals God's purpose in leaving us to go through the purifying fires alone. He seeks to bring us back to the making of an offering unto the Lord of the life in righteousness. Plenty of men

and women make an offering unto the Lord in sin, but such an offering cannot be accepted. Hence the Lord leads us through these fires of testing that we may be led to forsake sin and come back to a life of righteousness, where we may make an acceptable offering of the life we live unto the Lord. Even when He delivers one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (evil impulses) He does it in love and for our highest and best interests. Zechariah (13:9) so presents the thought:

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

In that passage is revealed to us just what is accomplished by the refining process. It brings us back into close relationship with God. He declares that when we have been tried, as gold is tried, that then we may call upon Him and He will hear. Then He will say: "It is my people," and they shall say, "The Lord is my God." Surely, the refining process has worked our return

unto the Lord in the little season when He has withdrawn His face from us.

All this refining and testing process is God's way to bring us back to the truth and to the life which is in Christ. God tried it on David, and it was a great success. How do we know it was a great success? Listen to David's own testimony after he had passed through it all, as brought out in Psa. 17: 3—

"Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress."

"Thou Art the Man"

Oh, what a change since the day of David's great sin! Then he shut his eyes, went headlong to the murder of Uriah. Then came Nathan and said to him: "Thou art the man!" He was condemned and miserable, and the Lord let him alone for a time, till he had been led through the fiery crucible in which he was purified, till coming back to God as in the fifty-first Psalm, he made peace with God, and now that he is once more God's servant, profiting by past experiences, he determines by the grace

of God that he will no more depart from the way of righteousness, and now he seems to rejoice in the fact that God has tried him, has visited him in the night and has tried him thoroughly. Or, as the Hebrew has it, thou hast *smelted* me, meaning as gold ore is smelted to separate the pure gold from the dross, giving the pure gold its right value and sending the dross to its place. So David felt, and now he seems to triumph in the thought that he is ready for God's testing at any time and under any circumstances. How wonderful are God's ways of saving us from sin and from ourselves!* How beautifully the poet has seen it all!

"What! take it at adventure, and not try
What metal it is made of? No, not I.
Should I now lightly let it pass,
Take sullen lead for silver, sounding brass,
Instead of solid gold, alas!
What would become of it in the great day
Of making jewels—'twould be cast away!"

* These are not two separate and distinct ways of saving men—they are parts of one complete plan. Jesus saves the unregenerate but penitent and believing soul from the curse and guilt of sin by the shedding of His own blood, making an atonement for sin. On the other hand He uses the smelting process of human suffering to bring back to Himself His straying and backslidden children, lest they should be overcome and swallowed up in sin and death. He afflicts, not willingly, but rather than have us lost forever, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." —*Heb. 12: 6.* This treatment yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness in the life of the afflicted and straying child of God.

Was Elijah Forsaken of God?

THE WRONG LEARNING

"A man may know all about the rocks, and his heart remain as hard as they; he may know all about the winds, and be the sport of passions as fierce as they; he may know all about the stars, and be as a meteor, whose end, after a brief and brilliant career, is to be quenched in eternal night; he may know all about the sea and his soul resemble its troubled waters, which cannot rest.

"A man may know how to rule the elements, yet not know how to rule his own spirit; he may know how to turn aside the flashing thunderbolt, but not the wrath of God from his own guilty head. He may have all the knowledge of a Newton, a Laplace, a Watt; he may know many mysteries and understand many hidden things, but if he has no personal knowledge of the love of God, brought near to sinful men in Christ, what shall it avail?"

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

—Mark 8: 36, 37.

COVERED WITH SILVER AND GOLD.

"A silver light illumes,
And gleams of verdant gold."

Contrasts are more or less striking and interesting. We get a vision of the ends of things. God is continually contrasting the ends of human character; the one is set over against the other, that we may the more fully grasp the meaning. One of these contrasts we find in Psalm 68: 13. It is full of meaning. It reads:

"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of the dove, covered with silver and her feathers as yellow gold."

In this contrast we get a view of the ends of human life—its beginning and its finishing. It holds up to our view a life in sin and a life in Christ; or, rather, a life begun in sin and finished in sin, and a life begun in sin and finished in Christ. The central thought of the text is the great transformation of human character as wrought by the

blood of Christ, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transformation of Character

We do not need the proof from the Scriptures as to the truthfulness of this thought, for we have seen over and over a person living in the blackness of sin, transformed into the whiteness of the righteousness of Christ—a literal transformation from the smut of sin to the gold of a Christlike character. The text itself is full of lights and shadows, showing a life despoiled by sin, but saved by grace. Such a study of the divine life is well worthy of our most prayerful thought.

I. *Unregenerate Man Is Like a Dove Among the Pots.*

It is well known that the dove is one of the most beautiful and one of the most harmless of birds, and yet the beauty of the bird may be greatly spoiled by smut. It is a striking presentation of the thought of sin working ruin in a beautiful and pure life. Miss Whateley, in her book, *Ragged Life in Egypt,* tells us of the custom of the

people and habit of birds which throws light upon the strong imagery of the text.

Defiled Things

In the East flat-roofed houses are very common. The flat roof is used for various purposes. It is a place of storage for such articles as are not desired to be seen by the visitor. Among the things most frequently put away after this manner are the pots and articles defiled by use. Of course, in a hot climate the birds seek relief from the heat in the shadow of any object within their reach. It was, therefore, a common thing for doves and other birds to find relief in midday by hiding among the pots on the flat roofs of the houses. Necessarily, though receiving a kind of protection, the birds came out with their beautiful plumage greatly despoiled by smut from the pots among which they had been resting. Then, in the early evening, as they flew forth in the light of the setting sun, their beautiful wings showed something of the tints of both silver and gold, only these were

soiled by the presence of smut. This is used by the psalmist as a striking illustration of the effects of men living out of Christ in sin. The man who takes refuge in sin is just as sure to be soiled—morally and spiritually—as are the doves which take refuge from the sun's heat by resting among the pots. What is more beautiful than a clean dove? On the other hand, what is more repulsive than a dove covered with smut? Here we get the contrast. A pure human character is the most beautiful thing in the universe, and the most repulsive is a life ruined by the filth of sin.

The Loss of Beauty

No bird can find rest among these smutty vessels except at the loss of its beauty, neither can a man trifle with sin except at the cost of his own peace and purity. The habits of the doves of the East find a parallel in the habits of men and women in all lands. Think of a beautiful bird spotted with the smut from the pots. Then think of men whose lives have become spotted

by mixing in with idolatry, wrath, malice, strife, uncleanness, evil-speaking, hatred, slander, and social impurity. No bird can live among the smutty pots and keep itself unsoiled, neither can any man give himself over to these sins and maintain the beauty of Christian character, of life in Christ. No man can possibly live surrounded by sin, apart from grace, and escape the taint of these sins. The doves, though most lovely and beautiful among birds, cannot maintain their beauty, living among the pots, nor can men live in sin and maintain the purity of heart and the beauty of character to which they are called in Christ.

II. *The Unregenerate Man May Be Transformed From the Smut of Sin to the Purity of Grace.*

The blood of Christ works out of human character the stains of sin, and it works in the beauty of the divine life, transforming the life after the pattern given in the garden. As the doves coming from the flat-roofed houses in the East, stained by the smut from the pots,

are transformed and made to shine in the beauty of the sunshine reflected upon them, even so men coming from the haunts of sin, with ruined lives, with a hopeless future, and coming into the light of the Sun of Righteousness, are redeemed and lifted up and made to show forth the gold of a Christlike life. How like the sunshine beautifying the soiled doves is the imputed righteousness of Christ, making a sin-cursed life resplendent with the beauty of the divine nature!

No Love for Sin

No sin can be loved, or knowingly served, and yet enjoy the fulness of the Christ-life. When a man gives up his sin and takes a stand for God and truth, then the Sun of Righteousness makes him to shine forth as one of the redeemed of earth, a veritable child of God! How striking is the picture! How gracious is the thought! How true are the facts! With such a reality before men, yet they choose to live among the pots of sin, tarnishing character and

marring beauty, till hope is blighted and all is lost—lost forever!

Christ said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In every invitation to sinful man, a movement on his part must be required. He must come out from sin. Like as the birds flying in the light of the evening sun were made beautiful by coming out from the smutty pots into the light of the sun, so may the lives of men and women be transformed, changed from the smut of sin to the brightness and beauty of the Christ—be made to shine as though there had not been the smut of sin.

Resistance of Unbelief

This is a great mystery. Many men refuse to believe it. They refuse to believe that in Jesus Christ there can be this transformation of human character. They are not slow to accept the idea that by upright living in themselves they may make the transformation, lifting them out of sin and into the light of a beautiful life. How easy it is to be deceived, to believe an error,

and how hard it is to be sure you are right, to believe only the truth! Man can believe in his power to lift himself out of sin, and yet we know that all such efforts are vain, failures all of them! Whereas, on the other hand, men who have forsaken sin and come to Christ for the transforming power have been made new creatures in Him. Strange, indeed, it is that we have so much confidence in human strength, and so little confidence in the strength of the divine One.

We can believe that clay and soot, with sand and water, can make a mud out of which the diamond is produced, and yet we cannot believe the greater truth that out of the smut of sin and ruin, God can lift human character into a likeness of Himself. Why is it that we can believe the one so readily, and cannot believe the other? The only explanation of this failure to believe God, while we believe so much in the power of man, may be found in the fact that our great adversary, the devil, endeavors to set us against faith in God, but does not care how much we

believe of natural truth. God saves through Jesus Christ, but natural truth cannot lift a soul out of sin. Anything to despite God—anything to take from Him His glory, the devil will do, while he cares not one thing as to what we believe of truths which do not affect our salvation from sin. It does seem that any man who can believe that clay and soot and sand and water can be brought under any power that will transform them into the diamond, ought to be able to believe that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse from all sin and make men to be Christlike in their lives.

Reflected Beauty

The little dewdrop, catching the rays from the sun, reflects the beauty and glory of the sun—a reproduction in the tiny dewdrop of yonder's great King of Day. How was it done? The sun itself cast its ray of light into the dewdrop, and the dewdrop showed forth the glory of the sun. We can believe that, but when we are asked to believe that the light from the Sun of Righteousness can come into human life and transform

it from smut to gold, we stop and refuse to believe it. No, if the King of Day has power to reproduce himself in a little dewdrop, surely the King of Righteousness can reproduce in us the likeness of Himself, and lead us forth from the ugly stains of sin into the glorious light of the beauty of God.

In Holy Writ we are admonished again and again to take heed what we *do,* what we *know.* May that not also include taking heed as to what we *believe?* With many it seems easy to believe if you see the moon in its first quarter over your left shoulder, you will be drenched with rain very soon, or if a rabbit crosses the road ahead of you, that you are doomed to an early portion of "bad luck," and a thousand other such nonsensical things, but if asked to believe that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin, at once these men begin to stumble—they cannot believe this amazing fact. Why this difference? One has nothing in it, the other has salvation for the lost wrapped up in its hidden mystery. The natural man can

believe a lie, but how hard for him to believe the truth! By the blood of Jesus we may be changed from *smut* to *gold* —from *sin* to *righteousness.*

"Would you be free from your burden of sin?
There's power in the blood,
Come for cleansing to Calvary's tide,
There's wonderful power in the blood."

The acts of your life are like straws on a river. They show the course of your life. Some streams flow so swiftly that it is not necessary to throw objects upon them to see their course; others you must test in this way. Which way is your life? Can it be decided by those around you which way it is moving without testing it? If not, you have something to do. Do it.—W. W. Kapnick.

Elijah on Mount Carmel

PURITY OF HEART

The lighthouse-keeper's most difficult task is making his glasses clear on sleety nights when the ocean spray freezes upon them. The ship is somewhere off in the storm. The light is clear within the tower. But if the glass of the lantern is allowed to grow thick with ice the light is dimmed as it pours forth the sailor's help. Cleansing of heart and life are necessary for clearness of vision in spiritual things. The assurance of Christ is that the pure in heart are happy, for they shall see God. The vision of divine life is not given to eyes that are dimmed by gazing upon unclean things. The thoughts of the heart do not rise to God when they are bowed to earth by the pressure of impurity. The vision of God belongs to those who have kept themselves apart from evil for His sake.—Congregationalist.

WITHOUT VISIONS OF TRUTH THE PEOPLE PERISH.

"Earth may give darkness,
But Heaven gives light."

In Bible times the vision was a chosen means of communicating the thought of God to His people. It was no uncommon thing for God to speak to man, making known to him His will in its bearing upon his life and service. In modern times the idea of a vision seems to have fallen into disrepute. The man who would now claim to be taught of God in this way might be regarded as a fit subject for the lunatic asylum, or be put down as a decided ignoramus. It may be well for us to remember, however, that all modern ideas are not necessarily correct, because modern. Let us not forget that in spite of man's depreciation of the old-time visions it is still true that God can speak to man by visions. We mean to say, if a man, who is qualified to see visions, may be found, God can speak through him now, as well

as in ancient times. There is a sense in which visions are just as essential to-day to the life of God's people, as they ever were. We may, or may not, have visions and dreams in the night-time, but the spiritually prepared man may have visions of truth given him in the study of the Word, and in his hours of meditation and prayer. Indeed, this is essential to the Christian life, for without visions of truth men cannot live spiritually. It was Solomon who said—

"Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law is happy."—Proverbs 29: 18.

Visions of Truth

Solomon had reference to visions of truth, of God's thought, as a means of nurturing and sustaining the divine life. Life and its development in divine things is dependent upon these visions of truth. The mind of man may be as truly impressed by the Spirit of God to-day as in any age of the world, if only the man's mind has been prepared for this privilege.

In olden times God spoke by a vision to Abraham, to Jacob, to Isaiah, to

Ezekiel, to Habakkuk, to Daniel, and to Mary, and others. In these visions, He has seen fit to reveal His richest thoughts, and His grandest purposes for the human family. When there is no vision the people perish. Sin may obscure the vision until life is choked out and men and women die from a lack of truth. It was so in Noah's times; sin so filled the hearts of the people that they lost sight of truth, and they not only perished in the flood, but perished spiritually. In the days of Eli there was no vision. People lost sight of the reality of truth and went forth to serve themselves after their own baser natures. There was a time of 450 years between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of the New, when there was no vision. Men did not speak for God, and the people went into darkness and sin. Men were so wrapped up in the things of the flesh that they completely lost visions of truth, and darkness reigned for hundreds of years. Solomon says such an absence of truth brings death to the people—a sort of a

spiritual famine in which the souls of men and women die for lack of sustenance.

Casting off Restraint

The full meaning of the text comes out more clearly in the *Revised Version,* which says:

"Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint."

When men lose sight of divine truth, they cast off restraint and rush headlong into ruin.

Joseph Parker, the great London preacher of the latter part of the nineteenth century, gives a very full and easy translation of this text, which is yet more expressive. He says its meaning is this:

"Where there is no vision, the people go wild."

We talk much of modern conditions. Is not the drift in human society to-day found in a wild rush for amusement and excitement, regardless of cost—a sure indication that they have lost the vision of truth?

Present-day Blindness

It may be interesting and instructive to inquire: *What is the vision spoken of in the text?* The answer is vital in its bearings upon the human heart. The true answer is: A real vision is the outcome of communion with God, in which we get His thought, illuminated by His Spirit. Much of present-day blindness on the part of intelligent, cultured people is because they have no illumination from the Spirit, and, therefore, though they see the literary beauties of the Word, they are unable to gain the precious truth which leads to life in Christ.

But how may one expect to enjoy these visions? Most truly by communion and fellowship with God. Truth creates the vision, and through it we come to know the thought and will of God. God in us is the very foundation of visions of truth. Indeed, without this illumination, no man is wise enough to get a vision from God. The young man at Dothan was blinded so that he felt all was hopeless. The old prophet prayed

God to let him see the great hosts round about them for their safety. His eyes were opened and he saw God's hosts protecting them. Even David prayed for open eyes that he might see the truth, that he might have visions of God, and so live in the fulness of the divine life. The disciples' eyes were holden * so that they did not know Christ. And so it has been with many professing Christians—they have failed to grasp the truth, and, as a result, they perish in sin.

A Famine of Truth

The truth of the text is demonstrated in the history of God's people.

1. *In the days of Eli we are told that there was a scarcity of the Word and no open vision.*

The one was a result of the other. Where the Word of God is well understood, there will be visions of truth. It is also true that the people went wild in the time of the Judges. Eli's sons were not alone. The multitudes lost the

* Luke 24: 16.

power of a vision of truth, and they went wild in sin.—2 Sam. 3: 11-14.

2. *In the days of Asa, Israel had long been without teaching.*

The result was they forgot God, and, forgetting God, they had no vision of truth. [1]

3. *In the days of Hosea, we are told that God's people were destroyed for lack of knowledge.* [2]

A thousand things are done in the name of religion, and for no better reason than ignorance. Ignorance is a shame for any people who have access to the Word of God.

Arguing Against the Message

4. *In the days of Habakkuk, iniquity abounded.*

The people went wild in sin. [3] The old prophet was sent to give them warning, but when he told them of their sins and of coming judgments, they *argued* against him, and refused to heed his warning.

There are certain conditions upon

[1] 2 Chron. 15: 3. [2] Hosea 4: 6. [3] Hab 1: 1-4.

which rests the possibility of God's people enjoying these visions of truth.

(1) *The prayerful life.* Communion with God is the open channel through which visions of truth are given.

(2) *The study of the Word of God must be faithful and honest.* We must seek for all the fulness of God's light.[4]

(3) *It is not enough to pray and to read the Word.* We must actually turn away from all known sin.

Why Truth Grasps the Heart

Mark well this fact: When man, with enthusiasm, takes hold of the truth, the truth takes hold upon him, and the very thoughts of God burst in upon his heart and mind—and beget a new life.

A man cannot have visions of things about which he has no concern. If he wishes a vision, revealing the thought of God, his mind must be centered upon the possibility. Columbus was the discoverer of America, now one of the richest and most progressive countries in the world. But Columbus was a student of geography—he was wrapped up in the

[4] Ps. 36: 9.

possibilities of finding unknown lands, and as he studied, God gave him a vision of this great country. With this vision burning in his soul, he could not be at rest. Though many disappointments came to him, he pressed on, until, at last, he discovered America. It is plain enough to see that Columbus received a vision of the new world because he had prepared himself for it.

The Hungry Heart

This is a fair illustration of what may come in the life and thought of any Christian whose soul is stirred for the deeper truths of God's Word, whose heart is hungry for the fulness of His love, and whose highest purpose is to know and do God's will. Many of us are looking for a vision in our ignorance. Though we have the Word of God in our homes, we do not study it. Are we waiting for an angel to come and point out to us the riches of grace and the fulness of life? Alas! Such an one will wait in vain. If he would have visions of God, he must know God's Word, he must have communion with God, and he must have

no other purpose in his heart than to do God's will.

Unquestionably, the saddest aspect of Christian truth to-day is the fact that this kind of vision has so largely disappeared, and the Church and her ministry are seeking to live upon the husks of truth—having lost her vision of real truth in many important particulars.

Lost Truths

If I were asked to name some of these lost truths, I would say:

The Church knows very little to-day, apparently, of the *bitterness of sin.* When men see their sins under the power of the Spirit's illumination, they will know the bitterness thereof. Our need is a clear vision of the bitterness of sin.

Again, the Church of to-day needs a vision of her own *spiritual impoverishment.* She thinks she is rich, but she is indeed poor. * She has houses and lands and gold and silver, and great men and women, but has she a clear vision of

* Rev. 3: 17, 18.

God's revealed truth? Does she really know how poor she is in God's sight?

Another truth which the Church has lost in a large measure is the *quickening of the Spirit.* Are we not trying to make salvation largely an intellectual matter to-day? It is true the intellect has a great place in the visions God gives to His people, but the Spirit must quicken our thought, our imagination, our wills, our consciences, and awaken us to the real needs of the Christian life.

A twofold truth, which seems practically lost to the Church to-day, is the *riches of grace,* and the *fruits of the Spirit.* A poverty-stricken soul cannot bring forth large fruitage. Neither can a heart, perishing for the want of a vision of truth, grasp the great privileges which are in Christ Jesus.

Another vision that has been very largely lost to the Church in recent times is *holiness of heart,* without which no man shall see God.† We are seeking now the wholeness of the intellect—its supremacy, but the intellect is poverty-

† Heb. 12: 14.

stricken, no matter what its accomplishments, until it is supported by a heart that is wholly given to God.

The Danger of Officialism

Even the ministry itself seems almost unable to command these visions of truth as gifts from God. We no longer feel keenly the need, and, as a result, our preaching is ofttimes fruitless, and the people are perishing for the want of truth. Sometimes the minister is afflicted with heart-blindness. He cannot see because the vision has disappeared—because of his failure to study the full truths of God's Word.

Is not the affliction of the ministry to-day *officialism?* We have come to regard our work, not so much as *a calling* as *a profession,* a matter of the discharge of official duty. Love and power seem to have gone out, and we are at work simply as *officials.* In this sense, *officialism* is a curse to the ministry and a blight to the life of the Church. It dishonors God and dwarfs the Church of Christ. When there is no vision the people cast off restraint—go wild in

the enjoyment of the fleshly life. If the ministry will call the Church to a prayerful study of the Bible, to a life of prayer, to the earnest service of God, both the ministry and the Church may yet see visions that shall bring life in all its fulness—newness of life which comes only from the life of God through Christ.

A CHEERFUL HEART

" 'He that is of a cheerful heart hath a continual feast.' . . . . Whether life to me is good and joyous and worth while does not depend half so much on what I have in my pocket as it does upon what I have in my heart. . . . . The problem of living happily and satisfactorily is not a problem of getting something, but a problem of becoming something. Life will take color and tone not from what I have, but from what I am. There are just as many people happy among those who haven't very big bank accounts as there are among the millionaires, just as many who find life a feast among those who eat very frugal fare as among those who luxuriate in over abundance."

Visions of Truth

HIS IMAGE

"Remember, you cannot see both sides of the coin at once. When you are discouraged by the striving of the animal nature, and utterly disgusted with yourself and hating yourself as wholly unregenerate, the noblest exercise of your mental faculty is to force yourself to turn over the coin of yourself, and think intensely into the other side. Say: 'But I am the Lord's; His image is stamped on me. His life is in me; His eternal purpose is my perfection. My true ego is His divine Spirit.'"

WAIT—IT WILL SURELY COME.

"And still from Him we turn away,
And fill our hearts with worthless things."

In the days of the long ago God often made known His thoughts through visions. To men and women whose hearts and minds were prepared to receive instruction, He spoke through the supernatural. In this way He rebuked sin and led His people to great victories. God rebuked Aaron and Miriam in a vision and taught Balaam the folly of his rashness. It was in a vision that He revealed to Isaiah the depth of his uncleanness. In a similar manner Paul was arrested, while persecuting the saints, and was converted. In a vision Peter was taught to call not that which God had cleansed common or unclean. To John on the Island of Patmos was given in a vision the greatest unfolding of human history in the Church of Christ that any man ever looked upon. These visions were always important. Sometimes they indicated

coming judgment, and sometimes, coming glory.

Waiting for the Vision

We read in Habakkuk 2: 2, 3—

"And the Lord answered me, and said: Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

In modern times we have almost ceased to look for the supernatural vision. The intellectual glow of the twentieth century seems to preclude the thought of God speaking to His people in this way. The change is in us, not in the Lord. No doubt He would speak to us now, if He could find the mind and heart ready to receive His instruction. The unprepared mind and heart are as surely shut to the visions of God as were the closed receivers of the wireless machine in mid-ocean on that fearful night in April, 1912, when for lack of a hearing ear the *Titanic* went to the bottom of the ocean, carrying with it 1,600 souls.

Signal Calls not Heard

On the ocean of time there have been many wrecks—there was no open ear to receive the signal calls, and all went down in ruin. It was so in Judah's history. In her sinful life God gave her warning through Habakkuk, but she was sin-deaf, she did not hear. There was one open heart and mind to receive it—it was Habakkuk. God had told him to tell Judah that because of her iniquity He would do a work among them in their days, but they would not believe it. Habakkuk's message to Judah was that He would raise up that bitter and hasty nation, the Chaldeans, that He would send them marching through their land to possess their dwelling-places, that they should come in violence, leaving destruction in their wake. Of course, Judah did not like that message, but they laughed at Habakkuk and called in question his authority. It is implied that they argued with the prophet to show that there was nothing in his message—they did not believe him at all. This mani-

festation of unbelief and resistance sent the old prophet to his place of prayer, as we read in the beginning of the second chapter, where he declared—

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto (in) me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved"—or argued with.

A Messenger of Mercy

Habakkuk came to them as a messenger of mercy to give them warning and an opportunity to repent and so escape the threatened judgments, the invasion of the Chaldeans and the destruction of their country, but Judah would not believe—they spurned the messenger and his message, and continued their carousals in sin.

Habakkuk offended the people by telling them the truth. That has often been the lot of the man sent to save. People do not like to be rebuked, or warned. They argued against Habakkuk, utterly discrediting his message. When they denounced him and would not accept his message, the old prophet said, "I know what I will do. I will go up and enter into my watch-tower

and there I will tell the Lord how they have rejected His message of warning, and ridiculed His messenger." In a very short time he got an answer. The Lord said—

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it, for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry."—Hab. 2: 2, 3.

Listening to the Inner Voice

A very beautiful thought is wrapped up in the first verse of the second chapter. When the prophet went up into his watch-tower, he said: "I will watch to see what He will say unto me." The English translation leaves the idea partly hidden, but the Hebrew brings it out. The prophet really said, "I will watch to see what He will say, not *unto* me," but *in* me. He knew what it was to receive a message for others. He also knew what it was to receive a message for himself—inner communion with God, a veritable heart-message.

No man ever lost finally by being true to God. Judah would not hear Habakkuk, but God heard him and rewarded

his faithfulness by giving him a vision of one of the greatest truths ever made known to man—a great comfort to the burdened prophet. We find the vision stated in plain language in verse four.

"The just shall live by faith"—a blessed hope for all Christendom. It was given almost seven hundred years before it was fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Judah sought to dishonor Habakkuk by rejecting his message, but God exceedingly honored him, approving his faithfulness and his courage by giving him a vision of a most precious truth—salvation by faith.

Distant, but Coming

God urged the prophet to wait for the vision. He said it is distant, but it will come at the appointed time. The vision was undoubtedly of the coming Christ and the salvation He was to bring. Here again our English translation leaves a great truth obscured, to say the least, declaring simply that "the just shall live by faith," but the Hebrew declares that by faith we shall live eternally—that is, in Jesus Christ.

While the vision was distant, the prophet was fully assured that it would come on time, speaking, proclaiming a great message to men, the real import of which is largely lost in our English translation, but in the Hebrew the word *speak* shines with divine splendor. It literally means one *breathing* or *panting,* indicating one with an important message, delayed, but hurrying to make time, lest it come too late to serve its great purpose—panting for breath as from a long run.

Waiting and Praying

There is another important thought which appears only dimly in our English—the prophet was ordered to wait for the appointed time. That implies *waiting in prayer*—praying to be kept in harmony with God's thought and purpose, ready to receive the vision when given. Marconi's transmitter will not give a message to a receiver which is not adjusted to the transmitter. So waiting for the vision means waiting in prayer, in touch with the Spirit, qualified to receive the great truth, THE

JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH. The lack of harmony between man and God arises from two sources. They are:

1. *The Weakness, Ignorance, and Indifference of Man.* These hinder a living union between the heart and God.

2. *The Devil, the Hinderer, Makes Every Possible Delay in Giving the Message of Truth.*

Satan a Hinderer

This fact seems clearly set forth in the tenth chapter of Daniel, where the messenger who was sent by the Prince of the kingdom of Persia was delayed for twenty-one days, but when he did arrive, the first thing he did was to assure Daniel that his prayer had been heard from the first day that he set his heart to understand, chastening himself before God, and that though delayed, the answer was sure from the start. That Satan hinders God's messengers seems to be amply supported by the best evidence. Paul told the Thessalonian church that he would have come to them once and again, had not Satan hindered him. We know that Satan resisted

Joshua as he stood before the Lord. Then, too, Paul declared that he was not fighting with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Knowing so well what all this resistance meant, Paul urged God's people not to cast away their confidence under trial—that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the reward. On the other hand, if we lose our confidence under trial, we destroy our own faith, the only channel through which God may come to us. Instead of giving up under trial, we need to betake ourselves to our place of prayer, as Habakkuk did, to see what He will say *in* us, as to His will and purpose. We need, when under trial, to talk with God, and this we cannot do to advantage in the hurly-burly of human society. We need to be alone with God in the hour of trial.

Why the Answer Is Delayed

Is there delay in God's answer to your prayers? Do not faint—remem-

ber that God's answer is on the way. The messenger may be delayed, but he will come, panting as one hurried in a race, showing God's purpose to meet us as soon as we are ready to receive. Satan may hinder, but he cannot prevent, answer to prayer. The devil is mighty, but God is ALL MIGHTY. Let us consider the significance of this vision to the Church of Christ away off here in the twentieth century of the Christian Era.

Habakkuk in his thought that God would speak *in* him clearly points to the inner consciousness under divine communication—a privilege which was to accompany the giving of the vision of living by faith. Jesus evidently had such a thought in mind when He said:

"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

Love has three links, one for the Father, one for His Son, one for man.

A little later Jesus also declared:

"And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them."

Manifestation of the Divine Presence

What is this manifestation but the consciousness of fellowship with Him, and what is this glory which He had with the Father, but the inner revelations of divine truth, given to believers for inner enrichment by faith? In this manifestation of the divine Presence the believer finds spiritual enlargement and gets a clearer insight into truths of the inner life, after the divine pattern —a life each one must get and maintain for himself through communion with God.

It is easy to give up seeking the riches of grace, but if we are to get the vision, there must be no let-up till we find the fulness of blessing.

Astronomers have discovered worlds out in space. They did that with the telescope, but the telescope is superseded—another method now leads the astronomer out into the fields of light—the use of the camera. Photographic films are exposed to the starlight of the heavens through the darkness of the night, when the very space of worlds is

photographed, revealing the presence and splendors of the infinite spaces of the universe—worlds beyond are brought very nigh.

In the Realms of Spiritual Light

This wonderful discovery has its counterpart in the realms of spiritual light. Using the telescope of his intellect, man has surveyed the fields of divine truth, finding here and there a world lighted. Let him cease from man, and looking beyond, let him grasp the light which the Spirit offers.

The believer who will open his heart and mind in the darkness of this world to the incoming light of the Holy Spirit shall receive such revelations of divine truth as shall qualify him to enter into the fulness of life in Christ. Paul explained what this means when he said only the Spirit-taught person can understand Spirit-taught truths.

The very name of Habakkuk hints at the method of making these larger gains in the divine life. His name means "the strong embrace of God." What a picture of the true Christian life—

caught up into the strong embrace of God and kept for service or for sacrifice! Let us, when passing through hard places, go into the watch-tower, the secret place of prayer, and there, in the strong embrace of God, wait to see what He will say *in* us, as indicating His will concerning us. Here let us rest in faith.

GOD UNDERSTANDS

"It is so sweet to know,
When we are tired and when the hand of pain
Lies on our hearts, and when we look in vain
For human comfort, that the heart divine
Still understands these cares, both yours and mine:

"Not only understands, but, day by day,
Lives with us while we tread the earthly way;
Bears with us all our weariness, and feels
The shadows of the faintest cloud that steals
Across our sunshine; ever learns again
The depth and bitterness of human pain.

"There is no sorrow that He will not share,
No cross, no burden, for our hearts to bear
Without His help, no care of ours too small
To cast on Jesus: let us tell Him all—
Lay at His feet the story of our woes,
And in His sympathy find sweet repose."

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THE COMING OF LIGHT

TWO PRAYERS

"One cried in earnest, pleading prayer:
'Lord, take the burdens from my heart;
Lift from my brow its crown of care,
Take from the rose its stinging smart.
Choose not the lonely, rugged way
By dark Gethsemane for me;
But lead me gently, day by day,
In pleasant pathways up to Thee!'

"Another voiced his soul in prayer:
'Lord, take no burdens that are best;
For while my brow is worn with care,
My spirit finds in Thee sweet rest.
Some souls but dimly see the light,
Let me their loving helper be;
And give me strength to climb the height
That leads at last to love and Thee!'

"One lost his burdens, and repined
In idleness, unloved, and unsought,
And learned the rose with thorn entwined
Is sweeter than to cherish naught.
One found in duty highest meed,
While unseen angels near him trod;
An almoner for souls in need,
He passed through human love to God."

A FOURFOLD VIEW OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH AS FORESHADOWED IN OLD TESTAMENT PARABLES.

"As the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds."

While the Old Testament deals largely with the people of God before Christ was manifested in the flesh, yet through types and shadows and miracles and parables, it has much to say of His coming and of the work of His Church. In this way we get early foregleams of the coming light of the Christian Dispensation.

Indeed, prophetic utterances were largely devoted to the character of Christ and His Church. Throughout the Old Testament we find here a type and there a shadow, here a parable and there a miracle, each in its own peculiar way revealing the Son of God going forth to war in the Church as His chariot of conquest. Let us look into

a few of these, as more clearly showing the mission of the Church and the scope of its great work.

A Child's Wise Answer

A child was asked, What is a parable? She answered: *"A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."*

That answer is full of thought. A theologian might not accept it, but it is doubtful if he could give a better answer. Turning to our task, let us study—

I. The Lost Equipment.

"And the iron did swim."—2 Kings 6: 6.

God Himself did not despise the day of small things, neither should His people. We have the bursting bud, the opening bloom, the growing, and then the ripening, fruit.

Elisha and his disciples had made a beginning for a school of the prophets. Of course it was crude, but it was the center of their activities and the scene of their growth. Their numbers had increased till the enlargement of their plant became a necessity. Some of the

students, appreciating the need of larger quarters, said to Elisha:

"Behold the place where we dwell with thee is too strait (small) for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan and take thence every man a beam, and let us make a place where we may dwell."—2 Kings 6: 12.

Elisha, recognizing the need, readily agreed to the proposition, and went with the young men in search of the timber. By the Jordan, they began felling trees for the enlargement of the school building. In a short time one of the young men quit work, not of choice, but because he had lost his equipment—his axe-head came off and fell into the water beyond his reach. He cried out:

"Alas, master, for it was borrowed!"

Recovering the Lost Equipment

Elisha asked the young man to point out to him the place where the axe-head sunk into the water. He did so. Then the old prophet cut a stick and cast it into the water where the axe had fallen. Immediately "the iron did swim," and as it came in sight the prophet said to the young man: "Take it up to thee!"

The young man put out his hand, took the swimming iron, delighted with its restoration. In the first place, the axe was borrowed; in the second place, without it he could not fell trees for the new school-building. No wonder he was distressed, for without his equipment he was useless. From this incident we may learn a practical lesson in Christian service, viz.:

The swimming iron is expressive of the character and work of the minister and the Church among men.

The restoration of the borrowed axe to the young laborer was clearly a miracle God worked through the prophet. No human agency can make iron swim. This incident gives us a striking portrait of the individual, equipped and not equipped, for service. Though it was a borrowed one, yet while the young man had his axe, he was equipped for the work in hand, but when the axe went to the bottom of the Jordan, the young workman could not longer work. Think of a man trying to fell a tree with an axe-handle—absurd, but no more so

than is a Christian at work, trying to lead men to Christ for salvation, while he himself has not the gift of the Holy Spirit. The axe was no more necessary to the success of the young man's labors than is the gift of the Spirit for the real success of the Christian worker in winning souls to Christ.

The Daring of Unbelief Is Amazing!

In an effort to dispense with the miraculous, some men have dared to say that Elisha pushed a piece of wood underneath the axe-head and so lifted it out of the water. Another class of would-be critics declares that Elisha thrust a stick in the hole in the axe-head and so pulled it out. How puerile! If there had been no miracle in it all, the incident would never have come to us as of any consequence. Alas, for man's unbelief! How humiliating it is to see a man criticising his Maker! It would be just as sensible to deny that the heat of the sun has anything to do with the germination of life in a seed, as to deny miracles as the legitimate outcome of the power of God.

A Borrowed Axe

The borrowed axe is suggestive. The lost axe is distressing. The recovered axe is an intimation of new service, and therefore a new joy in the life. Is not the Christian's equipment for service always borrowed? May it not be lost? In that event, he is as helpless as was the young man without his axe. As the young man's equipment was loaned to him for service, so is the Christian's equipment—the gift of the Spirit—loaned to him as an enduement for service. The young man's loss ended his usefulness. It is every whit as true of the Christian in service—he can serve successfully only so long as he is under the power of the Spirit. The loss of the Spirit is the loss of usefulness. Christ confirms this view, for He said:

"Without me ye can do nothing."

The young man did not try to cut another beam after he had lost his axe —how could he? In this he showed good sense. A blessing indeed would it be, if when we lose our divine equipment we would spend no more time in

an effort to do the work, but rather give the whole attention to regaining our equipment, as this young man did.

Sad, Indeed!

What is sadder than to see a preacher trying to preach the gospel when his power is gone—when the Holy Spirit has been grieved to the point of leaving the preacher to struggle alone? It is only a poor excuse for trying to render an impossible service. We doubt not it makes the devil and all of his imps laugh to see such an effort. The devil never fears the Christian who labors without his equipment, the gift of the Spirit. May the success of the young man with his axe, and his failure without it, ever be a reminder to the Christian worker of the certainty of failure, if his equipment is lost. The secret of the success of the new building for Elisha's college was in the fact that they followed God and obeyed Him—that is always the secret of true success in the Church.

II. The Flowing and Deepening River.

"And everything shall live whither the river cometh."—Ezek. 47: 9.

Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters! How marvelous! What a picture of the Holy Spirit flowing through the Church to the ends of the earth, giving life to everything it touches. Issuing from beneath the temple eastward, deepening and spreading as it flowed, the waters became a river that could not be passed over—a river to swim in, picturing blessed revelry in the fulness of the Spirit-filled life.

A deep and overflowing river is expressive of the fulness and power of the spiritual life of the Church of Christ.

The River Lined With Fruit-bearing Trees

Looking to the banks of the river, Ezekiel saw them lined with trees, bearing fruit for food and leaves for medicine. The river itself was life-giving—everything it touched lived, just as vegetation lives where the stream of water spreads—so spiritually,

whatever is touched by the River of God lives and flourishes and blooms and fruits. This river flowed through a dry country, but it put everything to its best —new life, new foliage, new fruitage, and a wonderful harvest! Not only did the river flow through a dry country, but it flowed into a sea of death. Nothing could live in the Dead Sea, but the emptying of these waters into that hole of poison, healed its waters, and forthwith fish lived in its depths. What a picture the Dead Sea gives us! Full of death by its own strength, meantime the river Jordan was pouring its fresh waters into its great basin, as if to destroy its death-dealing power by constantly flooding it with fresh water, but in vain! And yet the moment the holy waters began to pour into its depths, that moment its deadly waters were healed, and whatever sought to make a home therein found, not death, as heretofore, but life and growth and fruitfulness.

A Symbol of a Dead Church

What a picture of a dead church was the Dead Sea! Human goodness is poured into the dead church, much as the Jordan poured its fresh waters into this sea of death, only to find nothing had been accomplished—the fresh waters speedily became salty and no fruit, but death, appeared. When the river of holy waters began to pour into the Dead Sea, its waters were healed. So when the River of God begins to pour its living waters into a dead church, forthwith it begins to live and pour out its blessings upon humanity. Only the power of God can turn death into life, and only He can make life as a fruitful vine.

Again this Dead Sea is a fit symbol of the world, dead in trespasses and sin.

The river Jordan pouring its waters into its depths may represent the teachers, philosophers, philanthropists, humanitarianists, and merchant princes who pour their treasures into the lap of human want, but spiritually in vain! All of these combined cannot give life

to the great sea of humanity—cannot bring the much-sought-for uplift of men and women to this living life. It takes the power of God to accomplish such an end—when He sends the holy waters to flood the dry and perishing peoples, then everything these waters touch, lives, buds, leaves, blooms, and fruits, all bringing a glorious harvest in the salvation of the lost.

A Symbol of a Spreading Gospel

Note also the rapid increase in the depth and breadth of the river.

First it rose to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the loins, and then it was a river that one could not pass over, so deep and wide. A beautiful symbol of the River of God as the Gospel Stream, flowing from nation to nation till it reaches the ends of the world, and the beauty of its power is the fact that wherever it touches, life is imparted, and men and women come to know the Lord. How wonderful has been the progress of this mighty onflowing river! Ezekiel's vision, beginning ankle deep, swept on and on, deepening and

broadening, till one could not pass over it, but could swim in it. Beginning anew in the days of Christ with a few unlearned fishermen, this marvelous stream swept on beyond the Jews and took in the Gentiles, then through Asia Minor, Greece, the continents of Europe, the isles of the sea, and the western world, and now its tide is returning and spreading, through missionary effort, in Palestine, in China, in Africa, in India, and in South America, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the glorious gift of the glorious Christ to a fallen world!

III. In the Enclosed Garden and the Sealed Fountain.

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."—Song of Solomon 4: 12.

The tender lover, speaking of his bride-elect, compares her to a closed garden, to a sealed fountain! How expressive are these comparisons! They present at once the ideal of the true Church—the enclosed garden keeps all enemies away from the tender and beautiful plants and flowers. The sealed foun-

tain is the symbol of purity within, no poison, no filth can enter there to spoil its sweetness!

The enclosed garden is expressive of the separated life of the Church and the sealed fountain of its purity in doctrine and practice.

Shielded From the Blight of Sin

We are here taught in these figures that God puts Himself round about His people to preserve their character, beauty, and fruitfulness from the blighting touch of sin. Elsewhere He represents Himself as a wall of fire, protecting His own from the curse of sin. Satan must not be allowed the privilege of the garden, or the sealed fountain. Each of these figures seems to stand out, and in a way that cannot be misunderstood, proclaiming the separation of the Church from the unholy and impure things of the world.

Again, keeping up the figure of the garden, the Lover tells His Bride of the plenty that shall crown her life—

"Thy plants are as an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits."—Song of Solomon 4: 13.

How beautiful are these figures! How expressive of the blood-bought relationship of the Church to her Lord! The Church is a spiritual garden, nourishing tender plants, and bringing forth the sweetest flowers and richest fruits of the divine life. The Church can never be all of this till she is separated from the world—the Spirit of our God must enclose her as a fence encloses a garden, or as a wall, the fountain, keeping her from mingling in the ways of death and spiritual ruin. Enclosed, sealed by the Spirit, the Church is at once a mighty power in the hands of our God, but exposed to the invasion of the world with its poison and ruin, she is helpless and undone!

IV. In the Candlestick All of Gold.

"Behold a candlestick all of gold."—Zech. 4: 2.

How beautiful are the thoughts of God! How expressive is the language of inspiration! Every type, figure, parable, and symbol seems to overflow with the fulness of God, and yet these are

given to us so simply that the finite mind may grasp them under the illumination of the Spirit. Every word of God seems weighted with precious thought—food for the hungry soul.

The candlestick all of gold is expressive of the character and service of the Church in its highest state of spiritual development in the earthly life.

Light Givers

The candlestick all of gold is expressive of the light-giving character of Christ as He stands in the midst of His Church, leading the way to its highest state of spiritual development.

In Zechariah's vision of the candlestick there was no alloy—it was all of gold, giving out the pure light as from the face of the Sun of Righteousness. Gold is a symbol of Christ, but the golden candlestick, equipped with the bowls and oil, its seven lamps and its seven pipes, at once suggests the thought of Christ in the midst of the Church and through it giving light to the world. This interpretation seems fully justified by the interpretation

given to the candlesticks in Rev. 1:20, where it is definitely stated that the candlesticks are the seven churches. God thus foreshadows His purpose to give His Church light that it may know the ways of truth and righteousness and walk therein. Godlessness means darkness. On the other hand, in the light of God we shall see light[1] and walk with Him in its noonday splendor. The reason the Church does not live a pure and fruitful life is because she does not live in the light of God. Purity is God's ideal for the Church. He will not give her to His Son, as His Bride, till she is pure. To contend otherwise is to put God's ideal below that of man's, for no man wants a bride who is not pure and beautiful in life and character. Can God be satisfied with less?

Is Such a Life Possible?

Many are holding that the Church of Christ can never realize such a life on this earth. They believe it is too weak —that it has too many enemies lurking on its pathway, seeking its ruin, to per-

[1] Psa. 36:9; Psa. 139:11; Zech. 14:7.

mit it ever to reach such an ideal as God has marked out for it. But that view comes as the result of magnifying human strength and minifying the divine power. If we correctly read the promises of God, such a day is coming. It may be near, or it may be far, but it is coming—must come. God means that His Church shall be the spotless Bride of Christ. If she be not that, it will be because the Church refuses the discipline necessary to bring her forth as the gold that is tried in fire.

Even in the New Testament we are taught that Christ gave Himself for the Church, that it might be a glorious Church, not having a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that He might sanctify it and present it to Himself a glorious Church without a blemish.[1] That is the divine ideal to which God calls individual believers to come.

Shall Christ Have an Impure Bride?

Purity is Christ's own thought of His own blood-bought Church. To dispute it is to discredit Christ's own conception

[1] Eph. 5: 25-27.

of His finished work. That is sin, rank unbelief! Rather let us magnify His power to save and to keep to the uttermost. Men are saying such a Church in this world is impossible. But did not Jesus say: "With God all things are possible?" And shall we not believe Him? Surely God can, and will, give a pure Church as a beautiful Bride to His Son. An impure Church can never fill the place of the Bride of Christ!

It is little short of the marvelous to see what men can believe as to the possibilities of the power of man. It is no less marvelous to see how little faith men have in the power of God to work wonders in the salvation of man. We find no trouble to believe that the human voice can be heard thousands of miles away by the help of the wireless telephone, or that the eye can be given strength by the help of the telescope to grasp the location, distance, size, and appearance of the stars and the heavenly bodies, or that weak water can be transformed into steam and so become one of the mightiest powers in the

world; or we can believe that man can actually fly like a bird of the air, by the assistance of the aeroplane; or, that the ingenuity of man can devise a light with such penetrating power as to permit us to see through solid bodies, even through iron itself, or to see the bones in our own bodies, and without damage, and yet we cannot believe that God can give to His Son as His bride a spiritually pure Church!

Is Your Faith in God or Man?

Alas, for the power and the weakness of faith! We have mighty faith in the power and skill of men, but so little faith in the power and skill of God. The twofold nature of faith is a great mystery. With some people faith has wonderful power to believe in man, but a staggering incredulity when it comes to believing God for the working of great wonders in the spiritual realm. Men lean upon knowledge rather than faith, as if knowledge were a mightier implement of human achievement. We seem not to know that faith is the continuation of knowledge—a leap beyond

knowledge into the arms of God. Why this freak of faith? If through natural law such wonders can be accomplished, why not believe that God can and will do greater things in the spiritual realm? Is it not because our adversary, Satan, the disputer of this world, hinders our faith? He does not object to man's faith in history, science, and philosophy. It is only when man believes in God's way of saving to the uttermost, that the wicked one contests every inch of progress the believer makes. Believing is the mighty link between God and man.

"Through a dark and stormy night
Faith holds a steady light—
Up the blackness streaking;
Knowing God's own time is best,
In patient hope I rest
For the full day-breaking."

HOPE

OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

"In **Genesis** the world was made
By God's creative hand,
In **Exodus** the Hebrews marched
To gain the promised land.
Leviticus contains the law,
Holy and just and good;
Numbers records the tribes enrolled,
All sons of Abraham's blood.
Moses, in **Deuteronomy,**
Records God's mighty deeds;
Brave **Joshua** into Canaan's land
The host of Israel leads.
In **Judges** their rebellion oft
Provokes the Lord to smite;
But **Ruth** records the faith of one
Well pleasing in His sight.
In **First** and **Second Samuel**
Of Jesse's son we read.
Ten tribes in **First** and **Second Kings**
Revolted from his seed.
The **First** and **Second Chronicles**
See Judah captive made;
But **Ezra** leads a remnant back
By princely Cyrus' aid.
The city walls of Zion
Nehemiah builds again,
Whilst **Esther** saves her people
From plots of wicked men.
In **Job** we read how faith will live
Beneath affliction's rod,
And David's **Psalms** are precious songs
To every child of God.
The **Proverbs,** like a goodly string
Of choicest pearls, appear.

Ecclesiastes teaches man
How vain are all things here.
The mystic **Song of Solomon**
Extols sweet Sharon's rose,
While Christ, the Savior and the King,
The rapt **Isaiah** shows.
The warning **Jeremiah**
Apostate Israel scorns,
His plaintive **Lamentations**
Their awful downfall mourns.
Ezekiel tells in wondrous words
Of dazzling mysteries.
Whilst kings and empires yet to come
Daniel in vision sees.
Of judgment and of mercy
Hosea loves to tell.
Joel describes the blessed days
When God with man shall dwell.
Among Tekoa's herdsmen
Amos received his call.
Whilst **Obadiah** prophesies
Of Edom's final fall.
Jonah enshrines a wondrous type
Of Christ our risen Lord.
Micah pronounces Judah lost,
Lost, but again restored.
Nahum declares on Nineveh
Just judgment shall be poured.
A view of Chaldea's coming doom
Habakkuk's visions give.
Next **Zephaniah** warns the Jews
To turn, repent, and live.
Haggai wrote to those who saw
The Temple built again.
And **Zechariah** prophesied
Of Christ's triumphant reign.
While **Malachi**, with garments rent,
Concludes the **Ancient Testament.**"

GOD SAVE THE PEOPLE

When wilt Thou save the people?
O God of mercy, when?
Not kings and lords, but nations!
Not thrones and crowns, but men!
Flow'rs of Thy heart, O God, are they;
Let them not pass, like weeds, away!
Their heritage a sunless day.
God save the people!

Shall crime bring crime forever,
Strength aiding still the strong?
Is it Thy will, O Father,
That man shall toil for wrong?
No! say Thy mountains; No! Thy skies;
Man's clouded sun shall brightly rise,
And songs ascend instead of sighs.
God save the people!

When wilt Thou save the people?
O God of mercy, when?
The people, Lord, the people:
Not thrones and crowns, but men!
God, save the people; Thine they are,
Thy children, as thine angels fair.
From vice, oppression, and despair
God save the people!

—*Ebenezer Elliott.*

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